Book 7 ch331-409 Ultimate Truths Start

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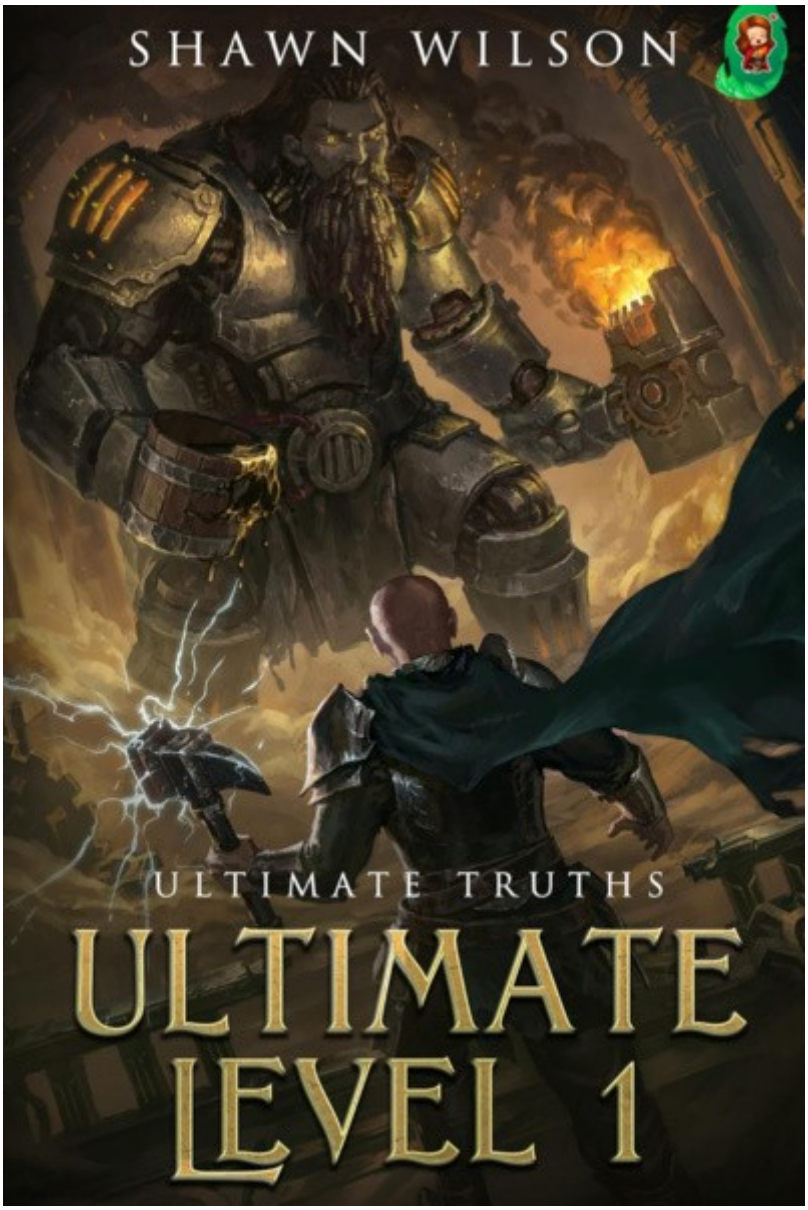

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Book 7 fully uploaded! Book 6 stubs Friday!

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2009526/book-7-fully-uploaded-book-6-stubs-friday 2025-01-14 15:16;

Just a reminder that due to Amazon’s rules I have to take book 6 down before the launch on the 20th of this month.

I also have book 7 completely uploaded and scheduled. 4 chapters hit on Jan 20th and then there will be a chapter a day until March 24th (ends March 24th). Last two weeks are 2 chapters a day!

as always I appreciate all the support you have given for this ride. Enjoy your week and looking forward to Monday!

just a fun update for those who want a little extra! My webtoon is going strong. Chapter 3 is getting colored as we speak and and chapter 5 has started its process! Looking forward to launching it later this year as well as having comic books / manga soon!

now all i need is someone to get an anime started :)

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Don’t want to wait for Monday? My patreon just dropped chapter 344!

Chapter 330.5 Recap For book 7

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2020100/chapter-3305-recap-for-book-7 2025-01-21;

Chapter 330.5 Recap For book 7
Book 7 is here!
The story so far…
Book 4
The tower is finally open to them, and after some assistance from Everett and Tom, the party gets a 5th member. Cordellia brings a bow and a high-pitched voice, adding damage and some laughs. Obviously there is that hard problem of how much Max can reveal, but thankfully Tanila can flaunt that magical power of being a princess and shut down a lot of the questions.
Max and the gang now find that the tower seems hellbent on throwing harder things at them, with rare spawns and some really nice loot.
Learning how the tower goes isn’t easy and that first boss fight against the wurm leads to some growth as a group where they pull together, go for broke and let Max melt his flesh away.
Eventually they learn that the tower likes to throw some hints at what is coming, and they continue to surprise the Faction leaders with everything they bring in.
Max also starts to play with his crafting skills, putting on another hat and name as he tries to find a way to use the materials gifted by the golden dragon god.

At the end of book 4, Everett calls ogre shite on everything Max says and swears to secrecy, learning about his power and potential.

Book 5

The action gets hot pretty fast, and the team finds themselves helping in a dungeon break outside the city, quickly realizing that hey… they are a lot stronger than the last time. Now they look like those cool faction people who roll out and bust some skulls.

Tom and Max spar a little, and their older trainer continues to feel Max is holding back, much stronger than he lets on.

Now the tower gets harder, and they find out that there are puzzles and other things worse than simply just fighting. Each step provides clues that the tower isn't what they expect. Even worse, they find beardless dwarves… the horror.

Dexic hits the front-page of the newspaper when her squad gets attacked and she takes out a few elves, calling for a fight that will surely be the end of her.

Max, being that nice guy, steps in, says he'll fight with her, and has to kick her golden rear in order for her to settle down.

Things go sideways when a few elves try once more to end Max's life, and now, the stage is set for him to meet Tanila's mother and Macy and Molly once again.

His power gets displayed in the arena, and Max stands up to the queens, letting them know he just wants to be with his friends and grow stronger.

Success for Max in the Colosseum brings success for the whole Faction, and things start to change as they have to prepare for the incoming horde of new adventurers wanting to be part of the Golden Axe Faction.

Boat rides, cannonball trips, and fighting with a stupid boss who kills itself against Fowl's damage aura all lead to a fun boss that just happens to be Kraken. (That's a pun… it's a crackin' kraken).

The team pulls out a win with Max's gift from the Merfolk (who knew pants would be awesome like his), and they find themselves ready to rest and relax for a moment. While out grabbing some hot buns, Max gets kidnapped and brought through a portal.

Book 6

If there was a moment you wondered what the heck could happen to Max next, this was it. A crazy psychopath hunter? Who disguises himself as one? Then shows their true power and gives him a seven-day head start after collaring him?

What is this? Some crazy fantasy book?

Anyways Max runs for his life, finding the world he is on now is much stronger than he could imagine.

"Bob" (yeah, Bob is ok with being called Bob now) and Max form a cool relationship, as neither have anyone else to talk to.

While making his way across the world (has anyone done the math and figured out just how fast he can run yet?), Max stumbles upon a lizard woman and lets his heart get in the way busting her out.

They make friends, he calls her Aimee… what could go wrong…

Eventually they end up in Quan Ma, and Max finds himself about to live the arena life. Whatever you do, it has to be kill or be killed, and thankfully our no longer bald MC is good at killing stuff. He befriends an insect and a tigerkin, and they make their way deeper into the city rings, earning tokens and a reputation. Eventually Jazzjak, the cuddly and loveable vorpal bunny becomes their benefactor, and they live the good life… until someone kills Romandis, the weapon smith, and Max goes on a rampage. He gets Aimee her powers, she dips… cuz ya… why not, and Max finds himself soon in the innermost ring of the city.

Turns out Igarra has a pocket dimension that allows others from different worlds within the system to come, bet on fights, and trade for powerful things.

Max goes crafting, makes a transforming weapon, beats nine opponents, and gets put in the tower by our favorite gold-scaled dragonkin.

It’s a trap (cue *Star Wars* battle moment). Endless waves of monsters come.
Eventually Max makes it through after forty days, and when he finally gets past that level, finds himself facing a silver dragon.
Max goes all “ultimate form” on Kuneoss; dragon realizes Max is special, and also that one attack from a powered-up guy can kill you.
With a promise made, Max loads up on dragon parts because, hey, growing big almost choked himself to death, and the collar that limited him is gone.
Now Max just needs to capture a dark elf, break into a secure vault, find a dragon egg, hide it, challenge a “god” to a fight, and win.
Yeah… that all happened… Max won, and got a TON of powers… which Bob ate… That bastard…
A quick jaunt to his old box reveals Ezreal, the hunter who poached his ass, trying to get out, and after a short trip down memory lane, Max lets Bob have some fun, ripping out a heart and gaining the power to return home.
Dang… this recap is LONG…
Anyways… Max returns home and freaks out Tom… flies off to the tower where Tanila and the others are (not really flying, he used a spear of wind, but hey it looked cool).
He then proceeds to power through the tower, Bob and himself revealing just how strong they really are as a crowd shows up upon hearing what he is doing.
Toss in a boss dying in two hits, and Max finds himself on the 48th floor watching his old crew fight.
He does what he’s good at, sneaking up, killing something, and then looking cool while making out with the elf he loves.
As if it’s hard being this strong, Max then grows 2x’s as big (and yes Fowl… everything grows 2x’s) and carries the entire team out the tower, setting the stage for the 49th floor boss.
A little wine, a little conversation, and everyone feels like they’re still missing out on everything Max had been through.
It was probably longer than this recap… but most likely not…
He and Tanila return to their room, bathe, and Max finds out she is pregnant.
Now he must protect not only those he loves but the child that so many will despise because of what it represents (humans and elves together)….
Whew… and now then… onto one last chapter before a REAL chapter…
You asked for it… so here is a list of all the skills Max has so far!

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Four chapters today!

Don't forget book 6 launched on Amazon! As always I am appreciative of launch day reviews!

Feel free to give it another read on Amazon or even just add it as a favorite! All those small things help the algo-rhythm love me!

Chapter 330.75 - Skill List

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2020119/chapter-33075-skill-list 2025-01-21;

Chapter 330.75 - Skill List
Lots of you have requested a skill list… so why not give it to you now? Enjoy the long list to read or listen to. If you’re on audio, you can skip this part, or you can listen and know exactly what each skill gives.

[Skill Description - Baking]
*****
Baking - Common: The user has a basic understanding of cooking breads, cakes, cupcakes, and an assortment of other treats focused around the baking class. Use of better ingredients will provide better results and potential experience bonuses.
*****
Okay, that's it for the skill descriptions, enjoy book seven…
Haha okay, that was purely to mess with audio folks… if you're reading this, then obviously you knew I was joking.
[Skill Description - Consume]
*****
Consume - Epic Skill: When killing a person, creature, or monster, the skill holder has a chance to consume some of the essence of the one defeated. Health, Stamina, Mana, Stats, and Skills have a chance of being gained. Stats consumed cannot be acquired if current stats are higher. Skills can be upgraded if a higher skill is consumed. No experience may be gained by killing creatures or others. No experience is gained via quests. Consume has a higher chance of consuming bonus stats. The skill also grows in sapient status as the skill ranks up.
*****
[Skill Description - Shield]
*****
Shield - Epic Skill: The user has a fundamental knowledge of all shields. They understand advanced tactics involving shield usage and can negate damage received upon successfully blocking an attack by 25%. Glancing blows can be created, which can reduce damage taken by 50%.
*****
[Skill Description - Berserker]
*****
Berserker - Epic Skill: When activated, your strength and attack speed will triple for twenty seconds, but you will be consumed by a controlled rage. If the target is killed before the effect ends, the duration will reset, and the closest enemy will be chosen as the new target. There is no limit to the number of times the duration can be reset. May only be activated once every twelve hours.
*****
[Skill Description - Elemental Magic Mastery]
*****
Elemental Magic Mastery - Legendary Skill: This skill provides mastery of all elemental magic, even ones not previously learned. Every attack will successfully hit the location they aim at. Attacks will critically strike and do increased damage. Mastery grants an improved casting speed and ability to cast multiple spells at the same time. Some spells may also be combined for increased damage and effects. This grants an understanding of combination attacks that may be used together. This rank negates defenses through the fifth tier, allowing unreduced damage to occur from attacks. Those who have achieved this mastery can determine how much mana they wish to infuse in a spell and are able to do so at a much faster rate.
*****
[Skill Description - Stealth]
*****
Stealth - Epic Skill: The user may activate this skill while not in combat and vanish from sight. The user may still be found by other skills that are not limited to sight. Attacking will remove the user from stealth. Looting and portals may be used while active and will not break it. Duration lasts for forty-five seconds and has a thirty-second cooldown after expiring. May not be activated while wearing plate armor. Must remain crouched while stealthed and moving.
*****
[Skill Description - Dual Wield]
*****

Dual Wield - Epic Skill: The user understands and is able to fight with a weapon in each hand. If their strength is high enough and the handle fits comfortably within their grip, larger swords, axes, and clubs can be wielded at the same time. Combination attacks and parry are granted with two weapons and operate off a combination of this skill rank as well as the user's weapon skill rank.
*****
[Skill Description - Sonar]
*****
Sonar - Epic Skill: This skill is permanently active. Any creature or object within a fifty-yard radius is detectable. All vibrations, movements, and sounds will be detected by this skill. It can nullify invisibility as well as stealth. Improved hearing within the radius of the skill. Ultraloud sonic attacks may disrupt this skill. Line of sight is not required to know how an enemy may attack. Some vibrations can be felt through walls and ceilings, depending upon material of walls or the strength of the vibration.
*****
[Skill Description - Melee Weapon Mastery]
*****
Melee Weapon Mastery - Legendary Skill: This skill provides mastery of all melee weapons, even ones not previously learned. Every attack will be more likely to successfully hit the location they aim at. Attacks will almost always critically strike and do increased damage. Mastery grants an improved understanding of combination attacks. This rank negates defenses through the fifth tier, allowing normal damage to occur from attacks. Those who have achieved this rank in weapons mastery will be able to negate defenses and find weak points in any opponent who does not have a similar skill level.
*****
[Skill Description - Power Strike]
*****
Power Strike - Legendary Skill: The user's next melee attack will multiply their strength by 300% and inflict a critical injury. The skill has a twenty-minute cooldown between uses.
*****
[Skill Description - Backstab]
*****
Backstab - Epic Skill: This skill provides bonus damage to attacks from behind. A max of 300% bonus damage may be applied if the user is hidden and strikes. The maximum bonus damage is 100% if the user is not hidden. Target type may affect damage done.
*****
[Skill Description - Evasion]
*****
Evasion - Epic Skill: The skill provides an increased understanding of evading all forms of attacks. This only applies to attacks that the skill owner is aware of. It may not be used against hidden attacks. Skill grants a usable ability: **Parry** . **Parry** will block all frontal and side attacks for eight seconds. Attacks will be stopped, but the power behind the attack cannot be fully mitigated. Some magical spells can be blocked. This ability has a four-hour cooldown.
*****
[Skill Description - Haste]
*****
Haste - Uncommon Skill: This activatable skill provides thirty seconds of increased movement speed. With increased speed comes an equal increase in agility. The current bonus is 250%. During this skill use, stamina use is mitigated. Attacking will end the skill. Defending will not end the skill. Has a seventy-two-hour cooldown.
*****
[Skill Description - Festering Touch]
*****

Festering Touch - Common Skill: The user must touch their opponent with their hand or glove. If they successfully transfer the debuff, their opponent will heal for half of their normal value until dispelled or one minute passes. This has a three-second cooldown and does not stack.
*****
[Skill Description - Death Magic]
*****
Death Magic - Rare Skill: Caster has yet to reach the level of corruption required to use this magic. As the corruption level increases, spells will unlock.
*****
[Skill Description - Conceal Self]
*****
Conceal Self - Epic Skill: The user may alter every aspect of their status screen as they desire. Name, Race, Level, Stats, and Skills may be set to any system value. Changing, adding, or taking away does not actually affect displayed information. Only an inspection skill higher than this rank may detect the actual status sheet.
*****
[Skill Description - Regeneration]
*****
Regeneration - Epic Skill: This skill allows the user to regain lost hit points at the cost of Mana. 100 Hit Points may be recovered each second at the cost of one Mana. At this rank, the skill may regrow a lost body part or organ at the cost of twenty Mana. Limb regeneration speed is quadrupled. The skill will automatically engage if the user is unconscious unless no Mana points are available.
*****
[Skill Description - Armored Warrior]
*****
Armored Warrior - Epic Skill: When activated, the user’s body will be covered in magical armor twice as strong as their current equipment for fifteen seconds. Resistances provided by equipment will also be doubled. Constitution is doubled for durability, and bonus hit points are consumed first. The ability cooldown is twenty-four hours.
*****
[Skill Description - Intimidation]
*****
Intimidation - Legendary Skill: The user can send out an aura up to two hundred yards in diameter, affecting those they want with an overwhelming fear. Anyone who fails this effect will be frozen and unable to move. If they are weak enough they may die. Some items may prevent this effect. Eight-hour cooldown.
*****
[Skill Description - Bulwark]
*****
Bulwark - Epic Skill: When activated, the user’s body will gain the rooted effect. Damage done to them will not cause them to move. A 200% defense bonus is given during the duration of eight seconds. If enough damage is done, the surface that the user is adhered to may be pulled free, causing both the user and chunk of material to be sent flying.
*****
[Skill Description - Dark Magic]
*****
Dark Magic - Rare Skill: The user has a basic understanding of working with magic that removes light and provides other disruptive elements. Most spells in the darkness line will not do large amounts of damage until later ranks but can cause chaos and confusion.
*****
[Skill Description - Poison Making]
*****

Poison Making - Uncommon Skill: The user has an understanding of creating poisons which may be applied to weapons or added to food and drink. Most poisons are of low quality, and using higher-grade materials will not result in their full potential. This ability may or may not provide the user with the ability to recognize certain poisons based on smell.
*****
[Skill Description - Trap Detection]
*****
Trap Detection - Uncommon Skill: The user is keenly aware of their surroundings and can spot mechanisms and other items which may hide a trap. If the user has an affinity to magic they may also be able to sense disturbances within the area around them.
*****
[Skill Description - Rampage]
*****
Rampage - Epic Skill: Activating this ability grants the user four attacks in the time it takes for one normal attack. May only be used with melee attacks. This ability has a twelve hour cooldown.
*****
[Skill Description - Weakness]
*****
Weakness - Rare Skill: User may apply this to an attack. If the effect is not resisted, it will lower the opponent’s strength by up to fifty percent. Used against higher-level opponents or ones with stronger resistance skills may negate some or all of the ability. Thirty second cooldown.
*****
[Skill Description - Demonic Magic]
*****
Demonic Magic - Rare Skill: The caster may activate magic from a different realm, unleashing unholy effects and damage. Curses will persist for thirty minutes, and a random effect will be determined when cast. Damaging bolts of power can be summoned, imparting weakening and other random effects. More information shall be given as the ability is used. Requires two demonic essences per spell.
*****
[Skill Description - Demonic Summoning]
*****
Demonic Summoning - Rare Skill: The caster may start a ritual to summon a demonic familiar. A successful summoning will result in a bound demon for one hour per fifty base intelligence. The caster must use blood for the summoning. Their own blood will result in a stronger demon, and the more given will also increase the strength of the familiar. Requires twenty demonic essences per summon. Cooldown of two days between summoning.
*****
[Skill Description - Demonic Teleportation]
*****
Demonic Teleportation- Epic Skill: The caster can move through the demonic plane, teleporting within fifteen meters of them. While moving through the plane, all momentum is kept. Some magical barriers will prevent teleportation from going through. Requires one demonic essence per cast. The cooldown is twenty seconds.
*****
[Skill Description - Weapon Crafting]
*****
Weapon Crafting- Legendary Skill: The user may craft weapons that will be known throughout the ages, provided materials are acquired for such a feat. The weapon crafted has four chances to gain stats or skills, each one having a base sixty percent chance of success.

During crafting, the user has a thirty percent chance to bestow the weapon with an element if the core required is present. May attempt a second element imbuing with a twenty percent chance of success.
Weapons crafted by the user of this skill will always be unable to injure the maker. Weapons crafted will be indestructible except by a weapon of Godly grade. The time required to craft a weapon depends on the materials used. The weapon may be crafted in stages and stored within dimensional pockets to prevent degradation of the process.
*****
[Skill Description - Armor Crafting]
*****
Armor Crafting- Epic Skill: The user may craft standard armor of exceptional quality. Armor crafted has a twenty percent chance to acquire two different stats. Armor has a five percent chance of being considered indestructible. Materials used may aid in the chance of higher-grade armor. Armor may be stored for one week in dimensional storage during the crafting process without any degradation of the process.
*****
[Skill Description - Magical Strike]
*****
Magical Strike - Rare Skill: The user's next melee attack ignores all armor, dealing damage based on the user's intelligence. This ability has a one-hour cooldown.
*****
[Skill Description - Formidable Mind]
*****
Formidable Mind—Epic Skill: The user is extra resistant to skills, spells, and abilities that attempt to control or alter their mind. When under an effect, the user can decide to activate the ability, freeing them from it. The cooldown is twenty-four hours.
*****
[Skill Description - Ice Resistance]
*****
Ice Resistance - Rare Skill: Reduces all damage and effects of cold-related attacks by 40%.
*****
[Skill Description - Poison Immunity]
*****
Poison Immunity - Legendary Skill: User is immune to all poisons of equal or lower rank.
*****
[Skill Description - Ranged Mastery]
*****
Ranged Mastery - Legendary Skill: This skill provides mastery of all ranged weapons, even ones not previously learned. Every attack will successfully hit the location they aim at. Attacks will critically strike and do increased damage. Mastery grants an improved understanding of combination attacks. With this rank of skill the ability of an Empowered Ranged Attack is granted. This rank negates defenses through the fifth tier, allowing normal damage to occur from attacks. Those who have achieved this rank in weapons mastery will be able to negate defenses and find weak points in any opponent who does not have a similar skill level.
*****
[Skill Description - Empowered Ranged Attack]
*****
Empowered Ranged Attack - Epic: Provides 2x normal damage for one ranged attack. Thirty-minute cooldown.
*****
[Skill Description - Engineering & Tinkering Mastery]
*****

Engineering & Tinkering Mastery - Epic Skill: This skill provides mastery of all crafting related to automaton, power core weapon creation, as well as robotics. The crafter will be able to make all components required to build and give life to creations when possible. Advanced materials will result in higher quality creations. When crafting Tier A objects there is a 5% chance for a bonus trait or skill to be granted.
When crafting power core weapons there is a thirty-five percent chance that bonus stats may be granted to the weapon. Weapons may have up to two power cores.
*****
[Skill Description - Power Core Crafting]
*****
Power Core Crafting - Epic Skill: The user may craft power cores from power crystals. These fusions will enable automatons, robotic creations, and power core charged weapons to function. The quality of the power core will determine possible power output. Advanced materials impact the creation rarity. There is a 10% chance to increase the power output of core by 50%.
*****
[Skill Description - Negate Death Blow]
*****
Negate Death Blow - Legendary Skill: The user will automatically resist all damage done if it would kill them. This ability may not be activated by the user. It will only activate when the system detects a blow that will kill the holder of the skill. If the damage is continuous it will continue to negate the damage until it stops. Damage prevented may be the last strike when critically injured or a single blow while at full health. There is no limit to the damage prevented. All potential injuries from that single attack will also be negated. Has a cooldown of once every thirty days.
*****
[Skill Description - Alchemy]
*****
Alchemy - Epic Skill: The user may craft standard potions of epic quality. Potions crafted have a twenty-percent chance to be twice as strong as the standard version. Potions have a five percent chance of being considered three times stronger. Materials used may aid in the chance of higher-grade potions. Potions may be stored for one week in dimensional storage during the crafting process without any degradation of the process. Skill also grants the ability to understand the properties of all potions equal to skill rank. Potions above the skill rank may be partially identified.
*****
[Skill Description - Magical and Power Core Infused Weapon Creation Crafting]
*****
Magical and Power Core Infused Weapon Creation Crafting - Epic Skill: The user is able to mesh both magical, elemental cores and power cores when crafting weapons. There is a 5% chance of the attempt critically failing during the process and ruining all materials.
*****
[Skill Description - Protect Ally]
*****
Protect Ally - Rare Skill: The user is able to relocate themselves with a thought up to twenty-five yards away, putting themselves in the path of an attack meant for their ally. This action is instant. Cooldown is four hours.
*****
[Skill Description - Fire Familiar]
*****
Fire Familiar - Epic Skill: The user can summon a fire familiar which will increase the damage of all fire spells by 25%. Has a thirty-minute cooldown between dismissing and resummoning.
*****
[Skill Description - Quick Attack]

*****
Quick Attack - Epic Skill: The user’s next attack will strike with three times the normal speed. No bonus to damage is granted. Cooldown is eight hours.
*****
[Skill Description - Acid Resistance]
*****
Acid Resistance - Rare Skill: Reduces all damage and effects of acid-related attacks by 40%.
*****
[Skill Description - Sand Mastery]
*****
Sand Mastery - Epic Skill: The user has the ability to control sand. They may change its structure or keep its original form. Once modified beyond its original design, it may not be changed back. There is no limit to the size or shape of what one may design. As long as sand is available and the user has mana, they can construct walls and even buildings. Weapons may also be created and controlled.
*****
[Skill Description – Elemental Mana Control]
*****
Elemental Mana Control – Rare Skill: The user has the ability and fundamental knowledge of how to control their mana while crafting. This does not convey the ability to always successfully infuse anything they create with elemental magic, but helps improve their chances to do so. The materials used during the crafting process may limit or aid in the use of this ability.
*****
[Skill Description - Stone Mastery]
*****
Stone Mastery - Epic Skill: The user has the ability to control a variety of stone. Use may change its structure or keep its original form. There is no limit to the size or shape of what one may design. As long as stone is available and the user has mana, they can construct walls and even buildings. Weapons may also be created and controlled.
*****
[Skill Description - Ghost Strike]
*****
Ghost Strike – Rare Skill: The user’s next attack will appear to be in a different location than where it really is. A ghost image of the attack will hide its true path. Some opponents may have skills or abilities which will nullify the visual affect. .
*****
[Skill Description - Wood Mastery]
*****
Wood Mastery - Rare Skill: The user has the ability to control a variety of wood. Use may change its structure or keep its original form. There is no limit to the size or shape of what one may design. As long as wood is available and the user has mana, they can construct walls and even buildings. Weapons may also be created and controlled.
*****
[Skill Description - Harden Body]
*****
Harden Body - Epic Skill: The user’s body takes on a toughness equal to twice their Constitution bonus. Any physical or magical resistance is doubled. Lasts ten seconds. Cooldown is twenty-four hours.
*****
[Skill Description - Ultimate Form]
*****
Ultimate Form - Rare Skill: The user’s body will evolve into a state of enhanced physical development. Their physical size and strength will be doubled. Upon

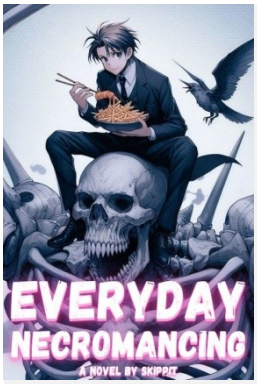
activating this ability, the user will heal most injuries except for fatal ones to the brain and heart. This state will last for two minutes. Cooldown is seven days.
*****
[Skill Description - Omnilingualism]
*****
Omnilingualism - Legendary: You understand almost all languages within the system. The ability to speak them is not granted. Languages which your vocal cords can correctly produce may be spoken. The granting of this skill includes the ability to read and write if your body can produce the written language.
*****
[Skill Description - Spell Burst]
*****
Spell Burst - Rare Skill: Next offensive skill cast will deal twice as much damage. Spell costs 3x as much mana. 1 day cooldown.
*****
[Skill Description - Arrow Volley]
*****
Arrow Volley - Epic Skill: The user can fire an arrow which will split into twenty different fragments, each carrying the same damage bonus, enchantments and any other effects of the arrow. Hits a twenty-yard wide area. Cooldown of one hour.
*****
[Skill Description - Blink]
*****
Blink - Epic Skill: The user is able to relocate themselves with a thought up to twenty-five yards away. This action is instant. Cooldown is four hours.
*****
[Skill Description - Mirrored Image]
*****
Mirrored Image - Epic Skill: The user creates an exact duplicate of their current body, wearing a modified version of all equipment and weapons. This clone will act independently after receiving a mental command from the user. No skills will be transferred. Half of current stats and hit points are possessed by the image. Cooldown is twenty-four hours.
*****
[Skill Description - Phasing]
*****
Phasing - Epic Skill: The user’s body becomes intangible. During this time all physical, magical and energy attacks will miss the target. Psionic and mental attacks can still affect the user. The user may also move through physical objects or enemies. If they are inside a physical object when the ability ends, both targets will sustain damage based on the power level of each object. It is not recommended for the user to attempt passing through objects such as stone and metal as they may find themselves weaker and end up dead. Against organic objects, constitution and other toughness perks will determine if the user or object is destroyed. Lasts five seconds. Cooldown is 12 hours.
*****
[Skill Description - Dimensional Space]
*****
Dimensional Space - Uncommon Skill: The user has a basic knowledge of dimensional space and is granted a few abilities. One ability granted is being able to access dimensional storage items even when within an area that has restrictions in place for such things. Some areas may be too high level for the user to still access their storage items. The user is also granted the ability to created an 8x8x8 room that can be accessed either in secret or by opening a door to it. Anything within the room will experience time at 1/5th the normal pace. Only the user may activate abilities while inside the dimensional pocket. There are thirty hours of air in the pocket for one

average person. Adding multiple people or other races will adjust air quantity accordingly. No natural light is provided within the pocket
*****
[Skill Description - System Travel - Block]
*****
System Travel - Block - Rare: The user is able to create a space up to one hundred miles that limits the ability of others to activate abilities or use devices that are equal to or lower in skill and grant teleportation. The distance one has the block set for will determine how much mana is required to sustain it. Each hour if there is not enough mana to sustain the distance set, it will shut down the ability automatically.
*****
[Skill Description – Dispel Magic]
*****
Dispel Magic - Rare: The user is able to activate this ability to negate all magical enchantments or to cancel out abilities that are currently in use within a ten-yard range. The user is able to select those they wish to affect. Any ability or spell that is within range and one tier higher may be canceled. The intelligence stat plays a role in determining the potential success when affecting higher ranked skills, abilities, or magical enchantments.
Permanent enchantments may not be canceled. Eight-hour cooldown.
*****
[Skill Description - System Travel - Planetary]
*****
System Travel - Planetary - Common: The user is able to travel between planets they have visit once a month. Travel is instantaneous. Anyone or anything they are touching may be transported with them provided they have the strength to carry the object. In order to add other locations to travel to, the user must find another means of arriving on the planet. One location may be set for arrival on the planet. Location may be changed once a month. Unable to use this skill to travel to the arrival point on the current planet. Some abilities and locations will prohibit travel to planets.
*****
[Skill Description - Planetary Travel - Waypoints]
*****
Planetary Travel - Waypoints - Uncommon: The user creates four waypoints on any planet they have visited. While on that planet they may move between those waypoints. Travel is instantaneous. Anyone or anything they are touching may be transported with them, provided they have the strength to carry the object. Waypoints may be changed but require two weeks to be reset. No waypoint may be within ten miles of another. Each waypoint may only be visited twice per 24 hours. Some abilities and locations will prohibit travel to waypoints.
*****

1 Chapter 331 - The 49th Floor

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2020129/chapter-331-the-49th-floor 2025-01-21;

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES



“You've got ten years to take over the world,”

…said the travelling salesgod to Bobby. Luckily Bobby was audacious enough to ask for a signing bonus, so he at least has the power to get the job done... Technically.

Armed with a System, his manners, and a possum he ran over on his way home, this will probably be the most destructive midlife crisis earth has seen.

Release schedule: Once a day for the next week and then once every two days after that.

Read Here [shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/102070/everyday-necromancing]

Chapter 331 - The 49th Floor

“How long should I expect you to be gone?”
Max could see the relief but also the tension in Everett’s face. He looked to have aged a year in the months he had been kidnapped, captured, or whatever everyone kept calling it.
“I don’t know. There are some other places we need to visit, and I might end up causing some trouble as we travel. No, let me rephrase that. I’m going to cause some trouble.”
Tom chuckled as he sat next to their long-lost Faction member.
“It’s been a week. and already you’re leaving after causing a wave of excitement through the city.”
“And I’m not done yet,” Max replied. “You both realize I don’t have a choice in what I need to do.”
Everett’s frown grew at those words, but he bobbed his head once.
“The difference is I’m pretty sure no one will flinch when you do. A few of the other Factions have reached out. They want to ask about working with you.”
“Unless you can convince me it’s worth it for you and the Faction, I’m not going to entertain that.”
Leaning over, Tom patted Max’s arm, smiling as he did.
“That’s the man I knew I trained. Now tell me, how do you think this boss floor is going to go?”
“Honestly, I have no idea. Whatever the tower throws at us, I have no doubt we can defeat it.”
“And the queens?”
Max couldn’t help but frown at Everett’s question. They had discussed his plans already, and both men had not been excited at his original idea.
“I won’t kill them. The chaos that action would create isn’t worth it, but I’m going to make sure they understand that if I ever find out they are behind another action aimed at me, my family, or my Faction, I won’t hesitate to return.”
Both men grimaced, but neither said another word.

With silence hanging for a moment, Max stood and motioned to the door.
“It’s time. We’ll come back and say goodbye before we go.”
Each started to rise, but Max just motioned for them to stay put.
Moving toward the door he forced himself to smile. Outside were his friends and Tanila, and he needed to ensure they didn’t see the darkness inside.
***
“It’s an honor! Please, you five, go ahead.”
Max smiled and held out his hand, shaking the dwarven warrior’s hand as they moved past all the other tower climbers that were in line.
He could hear their words, all the whispers to each other about what he had done.
At one point I would have been flattered… now… now I just need to finish this.
“Sir Pendal, you and your team are good to go.”
“It’s Max. Max Hoste. Sorry, I’ve decided to go by my real name from now on.”
The male guard nodded, jotting down a note on the tablet he carried.
“Forgive me Sir Hoste. Please proceed, and good luck in the tower.”
A few chuckles came from the adventurers behind them, and Max just smiled, moving to the portal.
“You want to go first?” Fowl asked. “After all, you’re a warrior.”
“I guess. I kinda hoped it would be you and an ice floor.”
The three women chuckled, and Fowl shook his head.
“Nope, it has been a while. You get this honor.”
Without waiting any longer, Max touched the portal, feeling the energy as it ran through his hand. When the window appeared and the option for the forty-ninth floor came, he selected it.
***
“Holy elf tits,” Tanila muttered. “Two strikes… I’m almost certain the second one wasn’t needed.”
“Se— I mean Max, can you tell me just how much power that first attack did?”
He smiled at Cordellia and nodded.
“Our beautiful mage was correct. I really didn’t need the second attack, but I felt like making it to ensure the head came off. The scales on the snake looked pretty thick, but in the end, I know it was overkill.”
He held out his new weapon, the one he crafted while trapped on a different world and pointed at the long, curved edge that was far wider than his halberd sitting in his inventory.
“Over five thousand worth of strength was delivered in that one strike.”
Everyone’s eyes blinked rapidly at that comment.
“HOLY ELF TITS!” Fowl exclaimed. “You… you could cut… anyone or anything with that amount of power!”
Shaking his head, Max frowned at everyone.
“No… that’s the problem. I can’t. The world champion I faced took that attack and ignored it. She easily deflected an attack stronger than the one I just delivered.”
Each of them gazed at one another, and he could see the connections being made when he realized what he had told them the first day he shared his story.
None of them really understood the difference in power then… Bob… I hope things are going okay.
“Were… were all the things you faced this strong?”
“No they weren’t, but as you forgot, Cordellia, I grow stronger when I face stronger foes. The hunter, Ezreal, made one mistake. He let me have a few pieces of armor. He didn’t truly understand my power and what it could do. I was so outclassed when we first met. When we finally stood face-to-face, that gap that had once been between us was gone, and I had surpassed him in so many ways.”
“And the tower? How do you think the next fifty levels will go?”
“Batrire, I don’t know, but I know that whatever happens, you four are my world. We’ll do what I promised, and we will beat this tower. In the end, we’ll all be strong enough so none of you will ever have to worry about someone hurting you again.”

Tanila came and put her arm through his, drawing him close and leaning her head against his head.
“No more of this talk. Let’s loot this chest and then hit the next floor. There’s a promise we made.”
Max smiled and rose up on his toes, kissing her on the lips.
“Fowl, it’s been a while. Why don’t you go first?”
Chuckling, the dwarf warrior nodded and moved to the scale-covered raid chest and threw it open.
“Well, ogre nuts, that’s a blessing I haven’t seen in ages.”
Everyone moved to see what was inside.
“Two pieces each,” Batrire muttered. “And six orange crystals. Everett is going to love you!”
Chuckling, Max shrugged.
“You all take yours. I’ll fetch mine.”
Without waiting, each reached for pieces of equipment, and Max fetched the two rings that were waiting for him.
[Inspect Ring]
*****
Scaled Ring
10% Stat Increase
Bonded
*****
[Inspect Ring]
*****
Ring of the Snake Lord
10% Stat Increase
20% Magic Resist
Bonded
*****
“Uh… is anyone else’s this crazy?” Cordellia asked as she slid a ring that looked like Max’s first one on.
“Ten percent?”
Their ranger nodded at Batrire, both women starting to smile.
Fowl ran up and gave Max a hug.
“Gods I’ve missed you and your broken loot!”
Laughing, he patted his friend on the back.
“I’ve missed you and how much of a loot whore you are.”
Both men chuckled as everyone took a moment, enjoying the fact they were all together and once more touched by the gods.
Summoning his shield for a moment, Max couldn’t hold back any longer.
[Simple Status Check - Expanded]
*****
Max Hoste
19-Year-Old Human Male
Level 1
Exp 421/1000
Tower Experience: 50.00%
STR: 1123+1911
DEX: 1101+1861
CON: 1047+1805
INT: 1018+1590
WIS: 1005+1572
Defense of the Dragon - 25%
Defense of the Demon - 25%
Demon Essence: - 1682
World Champion: - 20% Stat Increase
*****

“Testing something?” Tanila asked as they walked toward the portal behind the other three, who were almost giddy with their acquired items.
“Yeah… I’m just wondering what I’m going to do with all these stats. I’m not sure what to expect in the coming floors. If it scales off me like it did before, they could be so dangerous that you all entering might be an instant death. If they don’t scale, then at what point will we be prepared for when they are stronger?”
“Stop worrying, and enjoy what’s coming,” Tanila replied. “Besides, you’re lucky Everett had enough gems to level you to fifty. Of course that will make us have to farm a lot more.”
Giving her a kiss, Max smiled, glad that when she was by him, the anger and rage he felt vanished.
“Let’s go ahead and deal with what’s probably outside. Something tells me we’re going to have a group waiting on us.”
***
He had been right. Only one of the adventuring parties had gone into the tower, the rest waiting to see if they returned. A few cheers came, and Max waved, doing his best to downplay the moment.
“Two more levels to go,” Fowl said with a glee, rubbing his hands together. “I never would have thought this day would come.”
“Yes you did,” Batrire stated as she gave him a shove.
“You’re right, I did.”
The whole party was smiling as they made their way to the portal, once more let through by those who didn’t appear interested in entering the tower today.
***
“Seems like one of those floors,” Cordellia said as she motioned to the tall stone walls that vanished into the sky. “Looks like a straight shot through, provided it doesn’t turn or twist.”
A memory came, and Max couldn’t help but shudder.
“You okay, my love?”
Taking a slow breath in and letting it out, Max nodded.
“I just remembered what the tower floor I was stuck in for forty days felt like. It had walls like this, albeit not with about half a mile between them, and went on forever.”
“Well, you’re not alone. We’re here with you.”
He smiled and pulled out his weapon.
“Do we want to fight any or just run through?”
“Honestly?” Tanila asked.
“No… lie to me… yes, be honest.”
“I’d rather just run through if we can, and I think everyone is in the same mind. I know you want to leave soon, and we just need to check out the fifty-first floor before doing so. Why waste time if we don’t have to?”
Smiling, Max stored his weapon and retrieved the harness Tom had made him.
“I guess then it’s time to use this once more.”
Fowl chuckled as he moved closer to Max.
“I wouldn’t have imagined how happy I’d be to be strapped to your chest like a baby!” he exclaimed.
“A fat, hairy baby,” their ranger added.
“Hey, if the beard fits!”
Their laughter and jokes helped Max as he knew each of them were struggling to deal with the changes that were about to come. He could sense the fear coming from them, especially Cordellia. Her jokes came more frequently, and he knew it was her defense mechanism.
Even Fowl and Batrire seemed different, and he wasn’t sure if it was the time spent in the tower with Dexic that had brought it on or that he had returned, changed beyond anyone’s imagination.
Soon they were harnessed up, and he ran through the tower, slaying hordes of beetles the size of single-story homes with his spells as he ran. For a while Max ran at

angles, picking off more creatures and earning experience for his friends, but eventually after about an hour, he returned to the straight path.
After a second hour the portal appeared, and they dismounted from their harness before stepping through it.
***
“I’m ready,” Fowl said after shaking himself a few times.
“You sure?” Max asked.
“No, but that’s why you’re going first.”
Chuckling, Max touched the portal.
[Tower Floor 51]
[Enter]
[Yes / No]
Selecting yes, he felt everything change, and pain radiated through his body for a moment before finding himself standing on a yellow brick road, surrounded by a large garden of overgrown weeds, plants, and trees.
“Oh shite! Another plant level!” Cordellia exclaimed. “Tell me, though, why is there a yellow brick road?”
Shrugging, Max tapped it with his weapon.
“Seems like normal stone for a tower floor. Tell me, are we just checking out a few monsters, or are we going all the way?”
“Just a few monsters,” Tanila replied.
Smiling, Max winked at her and started to jog off.
“If I bring too many, Fowl be ready to tank!”
“Goblin shite,” their dwarven warrior cursed as he equipped two shields. “I hate when he does this.”

2 Chapter 332 - Questions for Queens

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2020135/chapter-332-questions-for-queens 2025-01-21;

Chapter 332 - Questions for Queens
“So, when I said a few, I wasn’t thinking that a couple hundred is what you heard.” Max shrugged, as he helped pick up the purple gems that lay scattered all over the road.
“Well, when I realized they couldn’t really hurt me, I started running through the trees and plants. Then I got lost, not because I didn’t know where I was but because it didn’t seem anywhere I went was the way I wanted to go. So then I used some of my walls to climb upward, rode an ice spear into the air, saw the yellow brick road, and came back to it.”
“Sounds normal,” Fowl scoffed. “I just flew around the sky on my ice spear.”
Everyone laughed as their dwarf mimicked Max and made flying motions.
“Anyways, I ran around collecting a few more monsters when that large group came out of the sides. That’s when I brought them all here and killed them.”
“Yes… killed them… or perhaps the words ‘eradicated them’ would be better,” Cordellia said. “I could feel the power of that storm you summoned. Ice and lightning… that’s a brutal combination.”
“Still, we know we can defeat them, which means eventually Everett will be happy as we climb up the tower.”
A few grunts came from their healer and ranger as both continued picking up the purple gems.
When they finally finished, they moved to the portal and exited.
***
“I’m sorry, sir, but the queens are not seeing anyone without an appointment.”

Max stood there, ignoring the fact there were about twenty guards all in full armor standing outside the closed gate that led to the palace.
“Did you tell them I was here? I’m certain they are going to make an exception.”
The young man’s whole body shook as he faced Max.
“Yes… they were informed. I uh…” He paused, turning to look at the other guards, who all were behind him, none meeting his eyes as they stared at the ground near their feet. “They sent word they were busy.”
Sighing, Max crossed his arms slowly, doing what he could to not frighten those tasked with a job it appeared none wished to have right now.
“Listen…”
“Keaton, sir.”
“Keaton… I’m going to go in there and talk with them. I promise you that unless they attempt to attack me, I won’t attack them. That said, I would rather not have to fight anyone today. I’ve done enough killing these last few months to make me not want to kill anyone. Do you understand?”
The man nodded, swallowing the lump in his throat, both of his brown eyes somehow able to see as he blinked every second or two.
“I… I understand, sir… it’s just we have orders and…”
“Do you think you could stop me?”
The young guard shook his head.
“Will you try to stop me?”
Keaton glanced at the others behind him and saw that none of them were moving.
“Perhaps… you could find another way in? One that doesn’t require me to see you go in?”
Unable to help it, Max roared with laughter, watching the young man force a smile as he did.
“You deserve a promotion. Very well. I shall leave for now. You men be safe.”
With that, Max turned and moved away from the palace hearing the breaths leave the lungs of all the men who had been holding it in for so long.
***
“How… how did you get in here?!”
Max watched as the two queens rose from their thrones, each of them trembling as one shouted at him.
“Queen Molly? Right?”
“Yes! Still how did you get past our guards?! Surely you must know—”
Max covered the twenty yards that had been between him and the pair in a second, watching as twins both fell back into their thrones, the dresses that were made of fine fabric smashed under their bodies.
“We can play this game, but trust me,” Max growled as he pointed a finger at each of them, “you do not want to do that. I came here in good faith to tell you what I have learned, where I have been, and what is going to change.”
[You have resisted an effect]
He could sense the power coming from Molly, and he turned on her. Stone from the floor began to rise up, shaping themselves into blades.
“Do not try that again, or I will make you suffer for it, do you understand?!”
Her head bobbed, and her eyes lost the glow they had.
“You two are fools,” Max said as he took a step back, ignoring the guards who were unable to move, their feet bound in the stone of the floor. “Tell me, when did you order the hunter Ezreal to kill me? And do not lie. I have a talent for sniffing that out.”
Both women glanced at the other, and for the first time Max saw they now knew who he really was.
Macy’s shoulders tightened, and it appeared she couldn’t speak as her body drew into itself. Her head immediately began to sweat.
Molly was blinking rapidly, and her lips and chin trembled for a moment.
“You… the black skill…”
“Is that a question or a statement?”
Macy nodded.

“We… we didn’t know that was you… We hired Ezreal after word reached us of a black skill holder… Phaius came… wanted to ensure—”
“Phaius himself came and told you to kill me?”
Macy glanced at her sister, who was still trembling, not having said anything.
I assumed he would want me captured… but dead?
“Did he know how I got the skill?”
“We’re… not sure. That is beyond what he shares,” Macy replied. “Rarely does he come. When he does it is not pleasant.”
Strumming his lip with a finger, Max tried to work through what he was learning.
“So you ordered my death before the incident with the elves?”
Both women seemed able to work their neck muscles as their heads bobbed up and down.
A lot of the rage he had felt left him knowing, neither had done this out of anything but fear of the *god* that ruled this world.
It’s hard to blame them if they were forced to act, but still…
Then another question he had wondered came.
“What do you do with the boys and girls you label as unskilled?”
“I’m… I’m sorry, what?” Molly said with a stutter.
“When the crystal during Choosing Day is red, clear, or black, what do you do with the boys and girls?”
She grimaced, pulling her lips inside her mouth as she began to chew on them, ruining the red makeup with each bite.
“They… they are transferred or removed.”
“Transferred? How? Why?”
Neither spoke, and Max grew impatient as the two sat there, their lips not working at all.
“Are you bound by an oath to not talk about this?”
Both nodded, groaning from some pain, it appeared, as they did.
“I don’t suppose you can tell me by who?”
Neither said a word or moved beyond the same lip chewing motion as before.
“Well, ogre nuts… that isn’t what I want to find out…”
Max began to move from the pair, retreating a few feet, and paced the floor of the room. After a minute, he paused and looked at them.
“The noble I killed in the arena. Alfred. Was he born with the skill he had?”
Macy’s whole body trembled but she attempted to talk.
“Noooooooooo.”
It sounded like a pained howl, but he heard the word as clear as day.
“Someone gave him that skill.”
“Please… don’t ask these questions… we… we cannot…”
Max watched as the pair both fought to breathe, almost feeling sorry for the pain it appeared they were in.
This must be how Everett would feel if he tried to talk about it. Just how painful is this binding?
“Fine. I’ll solve this myself. For now, you two listen to me and make sure that I don’t have to repeat myself. Do you understand?”
Both of them nodded, able to breathe with apparent ease at knowing he wasn’t going to ask another question about the skills.
“Do not ever try to hurt me, my Faction, or anyone I call a friend. If you do, I’ll come here and end your lives in a moment. Trust me, I don’t want the chaos that would bring, but I will not tolerate anyone hurting those I love. Do you understand?”
“You would dare—”
Macy leaned over and slapped her sister.
“Quiet! Don’t be stupid!”
Nursing her cheek, eyes red and glaring at her twin, Molly frowned.
“We accept. We will do nothing to get in your way or your Faction. As we mentioned at the arena, we desire to not have that conflict.”
Max nodded at Macy, seeing how the usually quieter sister chose to temper her tone.

“Good. Now then, one last thing. I’m going to be gone for a while. Don’t think I won’t return. Nothing will keep me from this place. Do you understand?”
Macy gave a curt nod as her sister sat on her throne, shaking with what Max assumed was anger at her sister.
“Then I shall take my leave,” he said, returning the stone blades to their original spot and smoothing out the floor to how it had once been, never needing to look at them, thanks to his Sonar. “Remember, I don’t like bullies, Queen Molly.”
With that said, he gave the tiniest bow he could.
[Waypoint Activated]
Max smiled as one moment he was standing before the twins, and the next he was looking out at the courtyard, watching a half dozen Faction members practicing.
I wish you were here for that, Bob. Hurry up and evolve already.
***
“I’m going to miss you and your never-ending surprises,” Alfreda said as she gave Max a hug. “Now tell me, what do you have for me?”
Chuckling, Max motioned to Fowl, who unloaded a few drops that came from the hundreds of plants and creatures he had killed on the fifty-first floor.
A squeal of delight escaped the older woman’s lips as she moved to the stone table, picking up the items and inspecting them.
“These are some nice new additions, though I’m not sure why we had to use this room.”
Max grinned, and Tanila couldn’t hold the groan inside any longer.
Everett, Tom, and Alfreda turned to see Max wink at them before moving to the far end of the room.
“Stay over there. This might take a while, but I’m certain you’ll be excited.”
As he prepared to pull out the first item, Max paused and then shook his head.
“Wait a moment. Fowl, get the three of them a chair first, please.”
“I’ll be fine,” their trainer stated.
“No. No, you won’t,” Max replied.
Seeing the look on his face, all three took the chair offered to them.
“Is this one of the missing dining room chairs?” Everett asked as he studied it.
Without waiting any longer, Max began to pull dragon scale after dragon scale from his storage.
It had been so full, and while everyone in his party knew he had collected a bunch, he hadn’t shared exactly what that number was.
Soon two-thirds of the room was stacked with scales, silver, and gold, and over forty teeth were lying on the floor in piles.
Fowl had summoned another chair and was sitting on it, while Cordellia leaned against the stone table.
“By Ockrim’s beard, that’s… a dwarven king’s treasure room right there.”
Chuckling, Max continued his dispersal of items, dropping more of the goods he had pilfered from Igarra’s vault, things he knew he wouldn’t need for a while.
Finally when he was done, four-fifths of the room was packed with items piled up on the stone table and all over the floor.
“Kings… kingdoms would pay… no, they couldn’t pay for all this,” Everett said, his voice cracking twice.
“Max… this is too much.”
“I’m not giving it all to you, Tom. I just need someone else to hold on to some of it. Eventually I’m going to need room in my storage space.”
“Dear boy,” Alfreda cried out, tears coming from her eyes, “you are the son I never had but wished I did!”
Everyone laughed as the older woman came and gave Max another hug.
“Hey, he’s already spoken for,” Tanila cried out.
“Bah, he’s young enough for two!”

2-1 Book 6 is live!

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2020148/book-6-is-live 2025-01-21;

Welp, it's hard to believe it but another book is now up for grabs on Amazon!

Words often don't feel like they're enough to convey how much I appreciate you all for following this story. I do my best to keep glancing at the comments and it's crazy to see some of you are still here after a year+ of this thing being live!!

Book 7 is done as most of you know and I'm well over 50,000 words on book 8! Looking forward to finishing the series with book 9 in a few months and then preparing for what comes next!

Looking forward to the day the series finishes! I've got some fun plans to give away signed sets so don't miss out when that moment comes!

Enjoy your week and the launch of book 7!

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Don't forget to check out book 6! [full_link https://www.royalroad.com/amazon/B0DL459C5W]

If you love the story an awesome early reader review helps me out a ton! (apparently someone didn't love it and dropped a 1 star review...)

3 Chapter 333 - Admitting to Cheating

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2021949/chapter-333-admitting-to-cheating 2025-01-23 10:16;

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Hey Everyone! One of my good friends and long time author buddies just launched on Amazon! I read his story and enjoyed it!

[shoutout_link https://bookgoodies.com/a/1039479782]

Chapter 333 - Admitting to Cheating

“This feels really weird,” Cordellia stated as she motioned at the others in the carriage with her. “I mean… I know there is so much I don’t know about, since I only joined after you reached the tower, but tell me why we are headed to Rumstant?”
“To check in on some old friends as we said before,” Max replied. “There are a few who we need to make sure are doing alright before we do the next part of this adventure.”
“And stopping at this tavern beaver place is important?”
Everyone laughed except Max, who smiled and rolled his eyes.
“I owe some money… I might have—”
“Might have?” Tanila asked, interrupting him. “You did cheat!”
Clearing his throat, Max held up a finger and gave her a side glance.
“Yes… I did cheat, but only because we needed money. Now that we don’t, I feel I should return what I took plus a little interest.”
“Is he for real?” their archer asked.
“Sadly, he is,” Fowl answered this time. “Never doubt his desire to do the *right* thing most of the time. Even if it means cheating in a drinking contest.”
Chuckling, all Max could do was smile and nod.
Sighing, he squeezed Tanila’s hand as he sat next to her.
“You okay?”
“I am… It was hard… very hard,” he replied, glancing out the magically tinted windows of the carriage they were in. “Never knowing if I could survive the next fight… seeing how powerful everything was… wondering how you four were doing.”
He pulled the heart necklace from under his shirt.
“I’m glad you had this to keep hope alive.”
“Dexic took care of us. More than I could ever believe,” Fowl said. “I know it wasn’t easy on her when you took us through the boss. Still, she appreciated how you promised to take her through when we get back.”
“He’s right,” Batrire added. “She stepped up and was impressed with how well we worked as a team. Even better was how much stronger we were because the tower didn’t feel the need to create floors like it had for when you were around.”
Feeling Tanila’s head against his shoulder, and the way she squeezed his hand as they talked, he could sense the tension in her body as his Sonar had nothing to focus on but his friends inside the small area.
“Still, I owe her more than I can repay. One day I’ll make it right.”
After a minute of silence, Cordellia suddenly burst out in laughter.
“Beaver nuggets! I get it now!”
***
Adharza’s eyes barely blinked as Max hit a third jackpot again.
“I… I don’t want to believe it’s possible, but you have made me a believer… still, why would you come back and admit what you did?”
“Because it’s the right thing to do. I shouldn’t have done it, but I felt we needed the gold, and now that I can repay it plus some interest, I wanted to make sure you knew how I did it. While I can’t promise there is someone else with my talent, I felt it only fair to tell you how, so you can perhaps prevent it somehow.”
She tugged on her braid, her face no longer matching the red color now.
“And these four? They agreed with your plan?”
“Bah, he doesn’t care what we think,” Batrire said with a grin. “He’s too kind. Personally, I would have come back and won again!”
The elven manager shook her head and sighed.
“I feel like I owe you something… my boss will be very appreciative of this knowledge. You do realize that I won’t be able to extend an offer to any of you to gamble here anymore?”
“I never expected you to. Now if you’ll excuse us, we have a room rented and want to enjoy a good meal before we head out tomorrow.”
Max and the others turned to leave, and he sensed Adharza’s hand coming up as she leaned forward on one foot.
“Max… one more thing, if I may.”

After everyone had turned, and he motioned for her to continue, the manager of the Buck Tooth Beaver Casino fidgeted, never letting go of the death grip on her hair.
“Is it true?”
“That I’m lucky to have this beautiful woman?”
A groan came from all four of his companions, and Max tried to not laugh as Adharza’s face bunched up, eyes squinting in apparent discomfort at how to answer that question.
“Uh, I mean… the tower. We heard rumors… everywhere has heard. You cleared eight floors in a single day.”
“Does it matter if it’s true?”
She bit her lip, still tugging on that braid, not acting at all how Max had expected after their first meeting. Gone was the elf who had been a pillar of confidence and tact. Now he thought she looked like some doting teenager, prepared to ask for an autograph.
“It does,” she mumbled as she looked at the ground. “If… if you are that strong…”
Adharza grimaced for a moment as she stared at him.
“It means someone might defeat the tower. And if they are with you, then… two elves would conquer it as well.”
His Sonar detected the small smiles that appeared on Tanila’s and Cordellia’s lips.
“It does. As well as two dwarves.”
A single tear started to form, and Max pulled a cloth from his storage, having procured a few in the last week. Handing it to her, all he could do was smile.
“I know that means different things to each race. Just know, I intend for my friends here to do what hasn’t been done if we can.”
Sniffing as she wiped the leak that had sprung, Adharza nodded.
“Forgive me… It just gives hope to so many. We have seen the number of people passing through go up as more and more adventurers have made their way toward the capital. It would seem that they are wanting to be the next person who accomplishes what you have.”
“Oh gods, he’s going to have a big head,” Batrire muttered.
“I appreciate those words,” Max replied, ignoring his healer. “We’ll do what we can to be a good example, even if it means admitting that I might have cheated and paid it back.”
Bowing, Adharza smiled the entire time.
“I am grateful for both your honesty and what you are doing. Be safe, and may you do what so many have dreamed of.”
***
“Okay… now I see what the big deal was about,” Cordellia muttered. “What bothers me though is how popular it appears we might become.”
“Because of people seeking us out?”
“You already know who I’m talking about.”
Tanila nodded at the response to her question.
“Yes… two elves being part of Max’s group will have no doubt reached my father’s ears. Only time will tell how long we have before an official summons comes.”
“And will you go?” Max asked.
She squeezed his hand and shrugged.
“I can resist it, even if it won’t be easy. Cordellia will be able to resist because I am here. The problem will be after we haven’t returned in a while. More will come, and they might not want to take no for an answer.”
“Bah, we’ll be fine,” Fowl muttered. “Max can always send them packing as he has all the rest.”
Sighing, their superstar shook his head.
“No… if I do that, things may get worse. I already have a mark on my head with the segment of elves who want me dead just for being a human. Causing more problems openly like that will only make things worse for all races as a whole.”
“War?”
Nodding at their healer, Max shrugged.

“On the planet I was on all this time, I learned a few things. One is that changing the status quo isn’t easy and removing a leader will have a major impact on everyone. Those who feel they can perhaps gain power will attempt it. Some do it through deception or trickery. Others attempt to use strength. It is hard to keep them all from succeeding, but one thing works well.”
“Being stronger?”
“No… that helps, but it’s fear,” Max informed their archer. “Everyone knows someone is strong. But if someone is powerful and kind or considered as one who won’t ask, then they will push boundaries and see how far they can go. If, however, someone is known for having no tolerance for any attempts that go against what they said, it makes most consider their actions beforehand. If you know getting caught stealing means you will always lose a hand that can’t be replaced, will you risk it? On the flip side, if you know getting caught stealing might mean nothing, then where is the risk?”
“I guess the latter would make me more likely to steal.”
“Which is why fear has a place in all the kingdoms for the most part.”
“Except the dwarves!” Fowl exclaimed. “I mean… we fear the king, but we don’t fear him like you humans or the elves do!”
“But we do fear the rules,” Batrire said. “We don’t break laws because of the penalties, but we also don’t break them because of how it impacts our families.”
“That is a distinct and rare thing,” Max stated. “Most kingdoms aren’t set up like that. The dwarven culture as a whole is different because the king doesn’t have to punish people independently. Families have an impact on how their children obey. Even still, would you tell me there aren’t those in the noble class or in the higher tiers of dwarf life who do not attempt things because of what the king would do?”
“He’d crush them if they crossed a certain line,” Fowl replied.
“Which means they fear him to a point.”
Everyone sat there mulling over that knowledge for a moment as the cart made its way toward Rumstant.
“One last question,” Cordellia said as she held up her hand. “What kind of kingdom would you have?”
“Me?”
She nodded at Max, smirking as he rolled his eyes.
“One where rangers aren’t allowed in.”
Tanila chuckled as Max shifted beside her.
“Seriously. What kind of kingdom would you have? What kind of leader would you be?”
Seeing that Cordellia wasn’t going to drop it, Max leaned toward her.
“I would be the kindest ruler I could be to my people. Everything I did and had set up would be for their success, but I would also be the ruthless one who didn’t allow for those who wished to do wrong to succeed. The problem comes with monitoring and ensuring that you have the right person. It isn’t easy just to say ‘Fowl’ did something wrong and deserves death. Perhaps he is set up. Now I would be responsible for ensuring all accounts were correct and right.”
“Gods, running a kingdom sounds tiring,” their dwarven healer groaned.
“It is. Just ask Everett how hard it is to run a Faction. Even without all the problems he cannot control outside of the walls, there are enough problems within. Everyone wants what they think they are owed, and if you remember when he was getting grief from the higher-level climbers for our *special* treatment, that wasn’t easy on him.”
“But we were better than them!”
“While true, it doesn’t mean it was easy during that time, Cordellia. He had to protect us, keep everyone happy, as well as deal with the council that he reports to. Just being the leader isn’t the top seat. There are five who oversee everything. It’s a business in the end.”
“I’m going to chime in one time before I stay out of this conversation,” Tanila stated. “Until you see the problems firsthand at running a kingdom, there is no way to truly

understand the scale of it. Having grown up witnessing the constant attempts by people who thought they could overpower my father and the fallout of their actions, I have little desire to be a part of that at all.”
Max smiled as Cordellia flopped against the cushion behind her and frowned.
“Not everyone wants power to rule. Some, like myself, desire it only to keep people safe.”

4 Chapter 334 - Big Buns and Big D https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2023690/chapter-334-big-buns-and-big-d 2025-01-23 10:16;

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/102425/everrain-reincarnation-litrpg-action-adventure]

Chapter 334 - Big Buns and Big D

“Seth!”
The squeal that came from the purple-haired girl as she raced around the counter and flung her arms around him filled the bakery.
Patrons had moved aside as she bolted past them.
Laughing, he caught her and spun her around, the two of them grinning like fools.
Max laughed even louder when he heard their ranger and mage talking.
“Isn’t that a little strange?” Cordellia asked. “I mean… it’s awfully friendly.”
“She’s like a sister to him, and besides, she doesn’t like him like that.”
“You’ve gotten bigger,” Aimee declared after he sat her down. “And no ugly arse brown spike off your shoulder either.”
“Thank the gods, no,” Tanila said as she moved forward and gave the young baker a hug. “I’ve managed to help him learn how to dress.”
Aimee’s head cocked to the side as she eyed Max, and the grin both he and Tanila were showing.
“You? And her?”
When he nodded, she squealed even louder and grabbed them both, giving them each a hug.
“Oh, that makes me so happy! Someone finally managed to tame him!”
“What the hell is all this—”
The sound of a metal pan hitting the floor as Baker Wright saw who his daughter was hugging made everyone in the working area freeze.
“Seth!? My gods, boy, you’ve grown!”
Just like his daughter, he came around with a speed that might surprise many, his large frame almost smashing one employee into the counter as he sprinted to the same spot Aimee had been occupying and engulfed Max in a hug.
“Gods, it’s been too long! The stories! Are they true?”
Max could feel the eyes of everyone inside the shop looking at them as he was tossed around for a few seconds in the embrace of the shop owner.
“I’d like to hear which stories you’re talking about before I say yes,” Max replied as he patted the large man’s shoulders. “How about you set me down, and I’ll go across the street and see if Big D is around, and we can talk there?”
Without waiting, the baker dropped Max and spun around, taking his apron off in the same move.
“Alissa, you’re in charge! Someone clean up my mess! I’ll be back at some point!”
With those words said, he started ushering Max and the rest out the door.
***

“My gods, boy… someone has been feeding you finally,” Big D said with a toothy grin. “You’ve put on a lot of muscle, even if you’ve not gained any height.”
Linda gave her husband a wallop to his arm and frowned.
“Ignore him. He’s just a moody old bastard! Now sit! Introduce us to your friends, and then tell us what in the world you have been up to! The rumors… they’re… they’re as big as those buns on that gaudy sign across the street.”
***
At some point word had quickly spread through the town that the famed Seth Pendal was in town and staying at the Two-Headed Ogre.
Most of the tavern was filled until Linda had closed the door to anyone else.
None had spoken outside of a few cheers and applause as Max and the others shared what they had been doing and the success they had experienced since last they had been there.
After they admitted to having reached the fifty-first floor in the tower and successfully killing a few mobs, the inn burst into cheers and applause.
“You’ve gone and gotten all famous,” Aimee said as she leaned up against her dad’s chest. “I’m surprised you returned and came to see us.”
“Please… I needed to make sure my favorite baker was doing okay.”
“Aww—”
“And that his daughter wasn’t too much of a pain.”
Big D and Baker Wright both burst into laughter as Aimee shot Max a scowl and gave him the finger.
“Tell me, boy, what are you doing now?” the tavern owner asked.
“Well, I have somewhere I need to go and wanted to stop and see a few people who made my life better along the way. After that we’ve decided to go to the dwarven capital for a bit. Some of my friends need to see their family.”
A sputter and spray of ale came from Fowl, who coughed at that news.
“What?! No one told me this!”
“Oh did I forget?” Max replied with a grin. “I was just thinking someone had promised to marry someone, and if we managed to—”
“WHAT?!”
Batrire’s face went bright red as she stared at Max and then snapped her head at Fowl, whose eyes were about as wide as his mug.
“Is he serious?”
Waving his hand in the air, the dwarven warrior tried to escape but was trapped in the booth.
“I don’t know anything about this! I swear! I mean…”
No one spoke as Fowl glanced between Max and Batrire a few times.
“Listen… just give it to her. I know you have it.”
Though his lips were moving, no noise came as the dwarf tried to manage the surprise of what his friend had just done to him.
“You have what?”
Sighing, Fowl shook his head for a few seconds.
“One day, Max… one day, I’ll get you back for this, I swear.”
“Max?” Aimee asked, her face bunched up as she glanced at the target of Fowl’s comment.
“My real name. One I haven’t used for different reasons but will be in the coming days. Now forget about me. My best friend here is about to do something we’ve all been waiting on.”
Clearing his throat a few times while glaring at Max, Fowl took a deep breath and then a small gold box appeared in his hand.
“Batrire, my love—”
“I already said yes!” she exclaimed. “Stop with the goblin shite, take out that ring, and put it on my finger!”
Everyone chuckled as the healer held out her hand, glaring at the dwarf, who wasn’t expecting her to be acting like this.

“But… fine… I had it all worked out… where I was going to ask and everything,” he complained while opening the lid and pulling out the ring Max had seen before.
It was a gold ring, covered in dwarven runes, and had a single ruby set in it.
As he slid it on the trembling hand of the woman he loved, Fowl smiled.
“A ruby to match your fiery personality and warm heart.”
“Bah! Don’t sweet talk me! You’ll get some tonight regardless, you big oaf!”
With those words said, Batrire leaned in close and grabbed Fowl’s beard, pulling him close and proceeding to make noises that would make most people’s stomach roll.
“Uh… save it for somewhere private?” Cordellia pleaded. “There are children present.”
“Now I gotta give drinks to the whole bar,” Big D announced as he stood from his chair, earning a cheer from everyone present.
With that job done, Max winked at Tanila, who shook her head at him slightly, smirking the entire time.
***
“Sam, if I didn’t know any better your beard has gotten whiter.”
“And if I wasn’t a fool, I’d know you’re not here just to compliment me and then ask for a kiss,” replied the old dwarven bookseller. “Now tell me, my boy. Besides my good looks and amazing hair, what brings you back to my place?”
Clapping a hand on the dwarf’s shoulder, Max motioned to a door upstairs.
“I need to give you a few things and ask a few questions but nothing you want to have said down here.”
Cocking his head slightly, Sam chewed on his lip before nodding.
“Fine, let’s go, but don’t expect me to put out. I’m not that kind of dwarf.”
As the door closed and Max watched Sam activate some runes he had recognized along the doorframe, he began pulling out books and setting them down on the small table in the office area.
“You don’t waste time, do you? Rumor has it you’ve cleared the tower in record time to the fiftieth stage, and yet here you are, in my shop. Now tell me what did you bring for me?”
Shrugging, Max continued to pull dozens of books out of his storage, many he had taken from Igarra’s place. A few he had read and, with his newest skill, found there was so much outside the world he knew of.
“You won’t believe half of what I tell you, so instead I’m going to just give you some things and let you sort them out. I made a promise also to return those,” Max stated as he pointed at the books Sam had given him before he left. “So let’s consider this part a bonus for being a friend.”
Picking up one of the books that were bound in metal covers, the dwarf’s white eyebrows came together as he tried to read the symbols and letters inside.
“I don’t know this language. Where is it from?” Sam asked. “I mean… none of this looks like anything I have ever studied, and as you can tell by the color of my beard, I’ve studied a lot.”
“A different world.”
The dwarf’s eyes left the pages he had been turning and focused on Max, who was grinning, pulling out more books and increasing the stack on the wooden table.
“You’re telling the truth. I can sense it… but how?”
“Secrets, Sam. Some things aren’t worth sharing, and you don’t want to be privy to that knowledge yet. Maybe in time, when I’m stronger.”
Chuckling, the bookseller put the metal-bound tome on the table and picked up another.
“Weak… says the boy who somehow finished eight levels in a single day.”
Still grinning, Max waited for the dwarf to inspect a dozen more before a new journal appeared in his hand.
“This, my friend, is a gift. I wrote down the basics to translate most of these volumes into elder dwarvish. I figure less people would know that language and you most likely do.”
“Because I’m old?”

“Oh, most definitely,” Max fired back. “Besides, you’ll thank me once you manage to read what I have. Now then, a few more gifts for my favorite ancient dwarf before I need to return to my friends.”
Moving a stack of books from Igarra over, Max pointed at two notebooks.
“These are copies of the current abilities, stats, and some other useful knowledge about creatures I’ve faced in the tower up to the fortieth floor.”
Picking up one, he flipped through it till he found the page he was looking for.
“Here is some stuff about the gorgon I faced with my friends—”
“So it was true? The gorgon and saving the other two members?”
Seeing the shocked look on Sam’s face, Max nodded and then smiled when the dwarf pulled a book from storage and began flipping through it, quickly writing notes after finding whatever page he had been looking for.
“As I was saying, I’ve tried to list what skills I think they have as well as potential levels they should appear in the tower.”
Glancing up from his book, Sam saw that Max’s finger pointed to the number forty-five.
“But you faced it before I thought.”
“We did… Now that leads me to the real reason I’m here, besides gifting you with immeasurable wealth and knowledge.”
Closing his book and setting it down, Max’s face changed from the jovial mood to a frown.
“I need to know why the tower might make what I face harder than others and why the loot we get is more powerful as well.”
Sam’s eyes widened at that question and comment.
“You’re saying the items you get are better than most? How do you know that?”
“It’s no secret the stats one typically gains based on the tower level. Ours are often two to four times that.”
Pounding his chest a few times, Sam coughed as he seemed to have choked on something.
“Two or four times… that’s…” Pausing, his eyes began to scan open space, and then a worn-out book with barely any leather left on it for a cover appeared in his hand.
“I… think there might be something in here, but if what you’re saying is true… then we are dealing with something not known about in thousands of years.”
“Then perhaps we should start reading,” Max replied. “I, for one, need to figure out how and why this is happening.”

5 Chapter 335 - Potions and Books

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2025707/chapter-335-potions-and-books 2025-01-23 15:07;

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/89317/license-to-cultivate-progression-fantasy-tower]

Chapter 335 - Potions and Books

“Seth Pendal!”
Max couldn’t help but grin as he saw Bardunac shuffling toward him, the inside of the alchemist shop now looking like it had been spruced up.
Giving a small wave, the five of them stood there amidst the rest of the people who were waiting in line to speak with one of the three workers at the stone counter.
“You’ve gotten bigger, and your eye! It’s healed!”
“It has, and it appears you are doing really well for yourself!” Max exclaimed. “Even better, you have a beard again!”

Every one of the dwarf's teeth showed as he began to stroke the braided blond beard.
"Yes! Not only that, but I've found a way to help keep it shiny and soft!"
"Shiny and soft?!" Fowl asked, moving past Max to get closer to their alchemist friend.
"Yes! Normally I charge for those first few bottles, but you four have earned them and…" Bardunac paused, looking at Cordellia, a single bushy eyebrow raising as he did. "New member?"
"Yes, this is our ranger, Cordellia."
"Pleasure to meet you!"
She came forward and shook the alchemist's hand before stepping back with the others.
"Now then, do you have more items for me? Have you come to collect the money you've earned?"
"A little bit of both," Max answered with a small wink. "Do you got somewhere… a little more private?"
Grinning, he led them to a back room, informing his workers he would return soon. After the door was shut and the dwarf ran his hand along some runes that glowed, he turned and motioned to a stone counter in the middle of the ten-by-ten room.
"Sorry it's a bit cramped, but I don't usually have more than one or two people in here with me at a time."
"No worries. Can I put stuff on the counter?"
After sensing the nod, Max moved to it and stood there tapping the stone, sensing a barrier between it and his fingers.
"Magical barrier to keep things from ruining the counter?"
Bardunac's eyes widened before he grinned. "Should I ask how you know that?"
"You could but it doesn't matter. I've got a few things for you, and since you were kind enough to start us off on our journey, I wanted to show you something most won't ever get a chance to work with."
Pulling out a backpack, Max donned a pair of alchemist gloves he had acquired and reached in. A second later a large liver as long as Max appeared in both hands, and he carefully set down the wet and squishy organ.
"Dear gods! Is that really a—"
"Dragon's liver? Yes."
Bardunac's hand trembled as he reached for it before stopping a few inches away.
"Bah, I need gloves!"
Seconds later, they were on, and he began to touch it, inspecting it all over.
"How? When? Where? I mean… no reports of dragons being killed or anything that would have something this size is anywhere in our kingdom! And you… you brought me this?! Why?"
Max moved around till he could see the dwarf, his mouth still open as a hand rested on the organ.
"You did us right. I checked the bank. All the gold has been put in every month, and based on the amount in the account, you have done well for both of us."
Snorting, Bardunac shook his head.
"I gave you my word! What kind of dwarf would I be if I broke it?"
"An oath-breaker," Fowl chimed in.
"Exactly! I wouldn't want my family name to carry that tarnish! But still… you could sell this for…"
Max couldn't help but grin as the dwarf's mouth began to lower, and his eyes widened even more, the skin on his face bunching up and creating waves of wrinkles near his hair.
"Seth… Seth Pendal… the tower climber… the one who defeated four elves all by himself in the arena—"
"Just three," he corrected the stuttering alchemist.

“That’s you?! I mean… the name seemed foolish, and I often wondered how many of you damn humans were running around with that name… You! You are the one they are talking about!”
Nodding slowly, Max ignored the groans and eye-rolls he felt coming from his allies.
“Please, for the love of Ockrim, don’t help his head get any bigger,” Batrire pleaded. “We can barely get his helmet on as it is.”
Laughter echoed in the stone room, and Bardunac took a few moments to compose himself, smacking his mouth as he stared at the group.
“But… you have a faction. Surely they could use this!”
“They have one,” Max informed him. “Besides I wanted you to have this. We all talked about it, and they agreed if you had kept your word, we wanted to give you this and a few other items to help you out.”
“More?!”
“Take a look.”
Bardunac moved with a speed that seemed unnatural for a dwarf of his size, and was at the backpack, peering inside.
“Holy elf tits…”
“A cultured dwarf!” Fowl exclaimed before breaking out in a grin.
“You… you can’t be serious,” the alchemist stuttered. “I mean… the—”
“It’s yours, Bardunac. I only have one request.”
Swallowing and turning to see Max, the dwarf nodded.
“Anything!”
Sighing, Max shook his head.
“I’d prefer you not to agree until you hear what I say. Regardless, I want you to send healing potions to a dwarf in Windsor Wheel. His name is Pete, and he runs the Stuffed Goblin inn. I’ll tell him to expect some, and they don’t have to be major ones, just minor ones to help new adventurers have a better chance at surviving.”
“Just healing potions?” Bardunac asked as he turned his head sideways, eyes flickering between everyone in the group. “Not gold? Not something better?”
“I don’t have that request, but you can do more if you want. I’m a fan of paying it forward.”
“Yes! Absolutely! And I… I’ll find other things that might help!”
Nodding, Max moved to where his dwarven alchemist was and extended his gloved hand.
“Then consider this deal done.”
Clasping Max’s hand with both of his, the dwarf shook it with every ounce of strength he had, smiling the entire time.
“Do you all need anything else? I’m not certain what I have would be worth it since you five are all… above tower floor fifty.”
“We are good, but thank you,” Tanila answered.
“Well then, one last thing at least!”
His gloves vanished, and Bardunac moved to where Fowl was and suddenly had two orange glass bottles appear.
“These are for your beards… the top one. Use it every three days after a good washing, and it will have a shine like mine.”
Taking the gifts, Fowl quickly pocketed one before handing the other to Batrire.
“Oh, I can’t wait to try this,” their healer exclaimed.
“When are you going to come back?”
Max frowned and then shrugged.
“Honestly, I don’t know, but if I can, I will. Just know I appreciate you helping us out when we were young in our adventuring careers.”
“You say that like it’s been a decade! It’s barely been close to a year!”
“That is correct. Now if you don’t mind, I know you have business to attend to, and we have a few other stops.”
As Max turned toward the door, he felt the dwarf’s hand coming for his arm.
“Uh… could you help me first?” Bardunac asked. “I can’t lift and store that liver.”

Laughing, Max turned and quickly picked up and stored the liver he should have realized might be difficult for most to lift.
“Sorry about that.”
“No worries… I guess this just shows how strong you have become.”
***
“I swear… if we stay here much longer, I’m going to turn into someone like Seth,” Cordellia groaned. “I mean… I’m giving archery lessons to new heroes.”
“Join the club,” Tanila fired back. “I’ve been helping the mages learn to practice, and Batrire has been teaching better healing rotations.”
Max sat there grinning as they reclined in a booth, giving nods and small waves at those who had learned about where they were staying.
“At least Dick’s growing. His place is about to burst.”
“Really, Fowl?” Batrire asked. “Did you just say that because you’re an idiot or—”
The smirk on their warrior’s face was all she needed to make her stop and sigh.
“Anyways,” Max chimed in. “I’m just waiting on one last thing, and then we can head out in two days. I ordered some things for Aimee and her father, and I don’t want to leave before they get here. Besides, I’m not the only one autographing stuff.”
Each of the others grinned and bobbed their heads.
“I think it’s cute you still want to help others, even though you’re some big shot now.”
“I’m pretty sure that’s not why you think he’s cute,” Fowl stated as Tanila turned a little crimson in her cheeks.
“So two more days of showing off and signing my name to everything,” their ranger said. “I guess I can live with that. Any longer, and I’m going to be fat from all these treats that baker and his daughter keep giving us.”
After having spoken a carrot cupcake appeared in Cordellia’s hand, and she sighed before using a finger to dig into the frosting and depositing it on her lip.
“Gahhh… sooo good.”
***
“I can’t take this,” Baker Wright repeated again. “It’s too much.”
“Well, I’m not going to take them back, and they’ll just stay here on your counter or until someone else walks off with them,” Max replied.
“Stop being so mean and say thank you, Dad.”
Sighing, the larger man grinned, and his head slowly shook as he took in the ingredients lying on his counter.
“Thank you, Seth… I mean Max… damn, one day I’ll get your name right. But thank you, son. Really. It means more than you can imagine.”
Shaking the extended hand, Max winked at Aimee, who was grinning from ear to ear.
“These ingredients should help you earn a few extra experience points as well as cementing your status as the premier baker in town.”
Snorting, Baker Wright rolled his eyes and then cleared his throat.
“I’m fairly certain your reputation and the fact you come here almost every day has done that. I can’t keep up with the orders for my treats, and even when I raised the prices, people *still* wanted to pay for them.”
“Success comes to those who are kind. You, sir, are one of them.”
“Bah, he’s not kind. He’s a heartless taskmaster who works us to the bone now,” Aimee teased. “Do you not see the bags under my eyes from having to get up earlier just so he can sell more goods?”
Groaning, the baker couldn’t hide the smile that was on all three of their faces.
“The things I have to do to teach her about running a business. Being a taskmaster is one of them.”
***
“Max… you need to be very careful about how you use this knowledge. Trust me, the people who look into things are scared, and when they respond how they did, this isn’t a good thing.”
Rubbing his face, and trying to not let his frustration show, all Max could do was bottle it inside.

Bob… how much longer? I could use your help?
The presence was there, and yet it wasn't. Whatever was happening, he couldn't get a read on it.
"Sam, I appreciate you looking into this for me, but if it's as bad as you say it is, stop."
"I'm fine, no one is going to—"
"Stop asking about it, I'm serious. I don't need another friend to get hurt, and I wouldn't want to have to come back and get revenge because someone felt they could use you to get to me."
Muttering under his breath, the bookkeeper stroked his white beard a few times as each of them sat around the table in the private room of the warehouse.
"Whatever you're messing with, if what you told me about how the queens responded, it's bigger than you think."
"Still… how can that be? I mean they're the queens! Who could command that kind of power over them?"
"You already know the answer, and both of us know how much power that group holds."
Nodding, Max glanced at the paper lying on the wooden table again.
***
- S
Don't keep digging. This bone is buried deep. The AG has ears, and F is gone. Hopefully he didn't suffer or talk.
- B
*****
Someone is dying for me and this bone… and I'm going to find out who and how.
"I'm serious, Sam," Max said as he glared at his friend, picking up the paper and storing it. "I don't need to learn you died from anything other than old age, which as we both know could happen at any second."
"Ogre shite! I got at least a hundred more years left in me!" Sam exclaimed, slapping his chest a few times.
"I hope so… for your sake, I hope."

6 Chapter 336 - The Stuffed Goblin

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2027506/chapter-336-the-stuffed-goblin 2025-01-27 10:23;

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Chapter 336 - The Stuffed Goblin

"Why is it you always make life dangerous and hard for everyone?"
He knew Tanila was trying to make a joke, but Max also knew it felt like people were in danger for being around him.
"It's something I need to figure out and take care of," he replied. "Somewhere, people are being kidnapped, possibly killed, or worse, and no one seems to know why."
"What's worse than death?"
Everyone looked at Fowl, who held his hands up before him.

“I mean… I know there are some things worth than death, but I mean death is death… it’s hard to be worse than that.”
“Torture? Maiming? Starving to death? Pieces cut off slowly, burned—”
“Whoaaa,” their warrior exclaimed. “Let’s not go down the dark path, Cordellia. I was just wondering what Max might think was the worse side, not needing nightmares for a while.”
“I don’t know. It has to be something to do with their powers, and it seems unlikely they would just kill someone. Especially after the way Molly and Macy acted.”
“You just say their names like someone who doesn’t happen to be royalty,” Tanila stated. “Still, you’re right, and even worse, I’ve never heard about anything like this, and I grew up in a castle with a father who tortured a lot of people.”
“Sorry,” she said after the carriage went silent for almost a minute. “I didn’t mean to ruin the mood.”
“It’s not you, dear. It’s what Max has told us,” Batrire replied. “I *can* imagine things someone might do for those kinds of skills, and what bothers me is that he is usually right. As much as it pains me, his intelligence is higher than all of ours.”
Fowl groaned and rolled his eyes.
“Always got to make fun of me, don’t ya, babe.”
She winked and nodded, leaning over and giving his beard a quick tug.
“Someone has to keep you humble.”
***
“My gods, boy, it is you!”
Pete deftly dodged a few adventurers who had stood up, all turning to see the party of five that had just entered the Stuffed Goblin.
“Pete!”
The two of them grabbed each other’s arm and drew in for a quick hug, patting each other’s backs before separating.
“What the hell have you been eating? You feel like a mountain of muscle, not that thin stick I remember.”
“Oh, I finally found inns with decent food and not this slop,” Max fired back with a wink.
“Bah, don’t speak bad about my food, or you’ll find a foot up your arse!”
Both of them chuckled, and the sound of a throat being cleared behind him reminded Max that he wasn’t alone.
“Pete, I’d like you to meet my party. Cordellia is the greatest ranger in the tower. Fowl, the shield we all hide behind. Batrire, our healer who has managed to keep us all alive.”
He paused and held out his hand, bringing Tanila to his side.
“And this is our mage and my special friend, Tanila.”
“Damn, it seems you gave her the worst introduction of all,” Pete declared as he bowed and winked at them all. “Welcome to my inn! Come let me get you a booth and get all these people sorted out! Oh, Seth Pendal, how I’ve missed you.”
Once Pete had said that name out loud, the sounds of chairs moving and scraping across the floor filled the room.
Then whispers began to drift across the eating area, and Fowl let out a groan that opened the floodgate.
“Goblin shite! Is that him?!”
“They’re the ones that beat the fiftieth tower floor!”
“Impossible! Why would they be here?!”
Wincing, Pete saw the commotion and then shook his head.
“Forgive me… that was not a smart move on my part… perhaps you can join me in the room we used before.”
Chuckling, Max nodded, and the five of them moved through the dining area, every eye fixed on them as mouths hung open. A few tankards that had been knocked over drained off the table and onto the floor.
“Ohh… part of me wants to be mean,” Fowl whispered as they followed Pete.
“Don’t do it,” Batrire warned, scowling at him.

***
Pete sat on the edge of his desk, Max finally realizing it was slightly smaller than most, custom-made for the dwarf's height.
"You, my boy, have done far more than I thought you would… and the speed! It was just yesterday you were here! Tell me, why have you come back? It's not the zealots, is it?"
Max shook his head as he caught the slightest change in the dwarf's gaze, looking at the two elves in the room.
"No. I'm headed home. Done hiding and need to look into some things. After that we're going to the dwarven capital. These two are getting married."
Jumping off the desk, Pete strode forward and held out his hand.
"Congratulations!"
Batrire shook it, while Fowl frowned.
"I'm assuming he's housebroken?"
"Almost… but you know dwarven men… not all of them can handle a dwarven woman."
Both of them laughed as Fowl muttered something under his breath.
"Anyways, a lot has changed in this town since Seth left," Pete informed them as he returned to his desk. "After he helped us capture some zealots that were killing the new adventurers, the guards have been a lot more involved in tracking who is going in and out of the town together. We owe a lot to this man."
Max ignored the glances he got from the other four as they looked back and forth between what they had just heard and the guy they knew was always trying to help others.
"Let's ignore all that," Max said. "I've got somewhere to go and need to be there in a few days. If I'm right, time isn't on my side. We would like to make a quick exit and escape some of the attention that you have just drawn upon us by saying my name."
"Me?" howled Pete. "Boy, you draw attention wherever you go if I am right."
"Dear gods, yes, he does," Cordellia exclaimed. "Everywhere!"
"She's right," Tanila added.
"So you don't need a room?"
"I wish, but there is still light in the day, and I want to be on our way as soon as possible. I just needed to stop by and see a few people real quick."
Cocking his head, Pete's face contorted as he was in obvious thought.
"While I know I was special… I can't think of anyone else."
"It's better that way. Trust me. As you know, I always seem to cause problems wherever I go."
Bobbing his head, Pete moved forward and extended his hand.
"Well then, let me say thank you for letting me know I played a hand in helping to keep our newest hero safe."
As they shook, Max felt Tanila poke him in the back.
Turning, he saw her make a motion of pulling a cork from an invisible bottle and drinking it.
"Oh, that's right, I almost forgot."
A box appeared in his hand, and Max held it out toward the inn owner.
"These are for you, and you'll be getting monthly deliveries of these and possibly other potions in the foreseeable future."
Pete took the box from Max's hand, both eyebrows becoming one, and set it on the desk, opening it slowly.
"Ockrim's beard! You're certain?!"
"He is. By the gods, he is," Fowl muttered.
"Why?" the dwarf asked as he turned around. "Why do this?"
"Because you have a heart almost as big as mine… maybe even bigger, and want to help people like I do. So I figured, why not give the dwarf who helped me when I was starting out an endless supply of healing potions to give to adventurers? If you notice the bottles, you'll see something."

Quickly turning around, Pete pulled one of the light green potions from the padded section and looked at the etching on the glass.
*****
Stuffed Goblin Potion
Try not to die!
Tell Pete if you paid for this!
*****
“OH MY GOSH! You thought of everything!”
“I figured if you’re giving them away, better to make sure they know where they are coming from and that it’s not to be paid for. Besides, I’m certain you’ll make a fine coin with all the adventurers fighting over getting to stay at your inn.”
Pete sniffed as he put the potion up and turned around, a few tears running down his weathered face.
“Boy… I…” He paused, taking a deep breath. “I’d say you were half dwarf if you had any hair on your chin at all.”
Batrire and Fowl started to howl with laughter as Max just shrugged, massaging his bald chin.
“Take care, Pete, and thanks again.”
The dwarf nodded, clearing his throat as Max patted him on the shoulder.
“Be safe, Seth.”
***
“You going to go in?” Fowl asked.
Max blew a raspberry as the others stood by him, ignoring the traffic of people nearby.
“I don’t know… it was… Last time I was here I felt a small connection to someone or something… How it happened or if it will happen again, I’m not sure.
Tanila squeezed his hand.
“You’re not alone, though. I’m here, as are the rest.”
“True, but should a pair of dwarves and elves go inside Phaius’s temple?”
He could feel their frowns and facial pains at that question. His Sonar picked up the faster pace of their hearts the longer they tried to decide.
Giving Tanila’s hand a squeeze, he let go and took a step forward.
“No… I need to do this. I’ll be right back.”
Moving up the stairs and into the temple, Max took a deep breath and let it out.
There was the same statue that he remembered from the first time. An overly muscular carving of a god he wanted to crush still stood in the middle of the temple.
Near it was the coin box he remembered had changed everything.
“Come to pray?”
The priest’s approach hadn’t surprised him as Max felt the robed figure moving toward him, the two of them the only ones in there.
“I am.”
“Good. Go and give your gift, and then lift your prayer to Phaius. He is a god who hears the prayers of his followers.”
Hesitating, it took him a moment to cross the floor, ignoring the scent of incense.
Standing at the base of the statue, Max closed his eyes, pulled a gold coin from his storage, and flicked it into the same box as before.
His heart raced as he waited, a prayer in his mind.
The temple started to shake, and Max heard a shout coming from inside and outside the temple, his eyes scanning the room.
Cracks began to form in the statue, and he heard Tanila calling out his name.
The robed attendant was pressed against the wall, and a look of terror held both of his eyes wide, as dust and stone fell from the ceiling.
Running out, Max saw the other four, all anxiously standing at the bottom, mouths open and their eyes looking left and right at the building.
People were shouting, calamity taking place as Max noticed it wasn’t just the temple that was shaking but Windsor Wheel itself.

A loud sound of thunder echoed off in the distance, and Max knew what had just happened.
“Stay here! DO NOT FOLLOW!”
He was gone before any of them could protest, running in the direction the sound had come from.
The townspeople didn’t even appear to be moving as he streaked past them, a blur most of them wouldn’t have noticed on a normal day, now invisible in the midst of the confusion by all of them.
In a moment, Max was outside the town, spotting a shape that was hurtling in the same direction he had just come from.
Both of them slowed down, as Max’s armor replaced the clothes he had been wearing.
Bob... if you’re there... Now would be a good time to talk.

7 Chapter 337 - A God Before Him

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Chapter 337 - A God Before Him

“So you’re him.”
Max’s hand tightened around the shaft of his halberd. The way Phaius casually spoke when they had gotten within ten yards of each other caused a rage like nothing he had ever felt before to bubble up. Every part of him wanted to attack, but he could feel the power coming from the god.
Energy seemed to radiate from the god’s body, crossing the distance between them, pushing against the effect of his Sonar.
It’s like some sort of aura around him... what kind of power does he possess? God dammit Bob! I could really use you!
Resisting the temptation and anger that had initially overwhelmed him, Max took a breath.
“And you’re the arsehole god that ordered my death?”
He could feel his blood rising, the top of his head becoming warm. Forcing his hand to loosen up around his weapon, every muscle in his body was tight as Max fought to hold back the rage he felt inside.
A slight frown appeared on the deity standing before him . Phiaus’s muscular frame matched the carved sculpture that had just been present in the temple. Clothes flowed loosely on his body and shimmered with a glow of some sort, almost white, almost yellow, depending on how it moved. Each piece was a tan color, yet Max could sense its power.
Two stud earrings were in each ear, and jewelry decorated every finger.
“A decision made in haste, I assure you. So tell me, boy. What is your name?”
Max felt his eyes blinking a few times and realized Phaius had no clue what his name was.
All this time, and he still doesn’t know who I am? Surely, if he ordered my death, he must have had some idea...
“I’m sorry, you still don’t know who I am?”
“Beyond a problem I cannot deal with any longer, no. I have many worlds, and you have cost me far more power than you could ever imagine. While your rise through the tower has granted me much, I...”
He froze, the perfectly chiseled face scrunching slightly, a slight wrinkle on his chin.
“You have cost me one world so far, and I am afraid many more worlds will fall soon because of you.”

The ten yards between them seemed like a chasm as Max suddenly felt the power radiating from Phaius increase. Cracks began to form and widen underneath the god as he stood there, studying the bald-headed boy.
“I cannot imagine how you acquired the skill preventing me from coming to my temple. I could have overcome it but would have destroyed the town in the process, and that is why—”
Both men dropped low, the ground starting to shake around them, when another sound rang out, booming like a volcano had just exploded.
A hundred yards away, a figure emerged through a portal that opened up, and Max felt pain tearing against the skill he had active.
[System Travel Block - Overridden]
He could feel his eyes widening as a dwarf strode out of the portal, one that he had seen before in books, on tapestries, and even as a statue.
Eight feet tall, covered in glowing silver armor, wielding a large two-handed hammer that was almost as large as its owner, the dwarf turned toward the two of them and began to walk with purpose.
Each step caused the ground to crack as it had under Phaius but even more so. Light radiated from his golden beard, and Max could sense a presence almost demanding that he bend his knee.
Suddenly, the power from Phaius grew. Gone was the simple clothing, replaced now by plate armor, which was purple and black, and had crystal runes sparkling along the surface. A shield and a sword appeared, and each one seemed to crackle with power.
“WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS, PHAIUS?!”
The dwarf’s voice boomed, making Max’s ears feel like they would explode.
“Ockrim… this is not the time.”
Slowly, the dwarf approached, his eyes glancing between the two men, and his scowl made his golden eyebrows become one.
“There is no better time when I sense a rift like what you just made on a world that is also mine. Now tell me, who is this man, and why have you done this?”
“I need your word that you will not attack this one,” the purple-clad god said. “Give me your word, and I shall tell you; otherwise, we shall find ourselves at odds over this.”
Laughter came, and the dwarf held out his two-handed hammer as if it were nothing more than a twig with a single hand. He pointed it at Max, shaking his head.
“You are not in a position to demand such a thing. We both know I am much stronger than you.”
Phaius nodded.
“You are… but I’m also not acting alone. Wekime has said this one needs protection.”
Max wasn’t sure who Wekime was, but the dwarf’s hammer dipped for a moment before it was slowly withdrawn. It was set upon his shoulder, and both eyebrows took turns rising and falling.
“Wekime… he… he spoke with you? He told you this?”
The sound of disbelief and doubt wasn’t hidden as Ockrim turned his full attention to Max.
“He did… it cost me greatly to have that meeting, but know this,” Phaius said as he pointed his purple and black sword at Max. “This one… has to stay alive for now, or we shall all fall.”
Only the sounds of wind were heard for a few seconds, and then a gasp came from the dwarf.
“There is only one reason for something to be said like that… which means the rumors are true. He is one of the three?”
“Would you all stop talking like I’m not here?”
Both gods snorted and frowned at Max’s words.
“You have no idea who you are dealing with, child,” Ockrim replied. “You are nothing but—”

“I’m a world champion,” Max interrupted. “I’ve defeated one already; you know what I must be. So treating me like you are will not endear you to me at all.”
“You dare threaten me?! A GOD?!”
A snarl formed, and the hammer was held in both hands, the dwarf’s fingers clenching around whatever metal the shaft was made from.
“Then kill me. See what happens then,” Max bluffed.
Ockrim opened his mouth and then closed it, snorting and blowing his golden beard out some.
“Let it go. He has us by the short hairs,” Phaius said. “Trust me. I already tried to have him killed once. Obviously, that didn’t work, and right now I’m glad I failed. Wekime is right. We need to watch over him.”
Clamping his mouth shut, Ockrim pursed his lips over and over. In a moment, his armor and weapon were gone, replaced with a similar outfit to what Phaius had first been wearing.
“I am glad the other has not appeared. She would be… less open to this.”
Nodding, Phaius returned to his original garb, and Max felt the presence of both gods decrease dramatically.
“So now what?” the dwarven god asked.
“Again, I’m still here. Who is Wekime, and why does he want me protected? Why are the two of you here?”
A chuckle escaped Ockrim’s mouth, and the first grin since he arrived began to show.
“He’s your problem. Tell him.”
Sighing, Phaius glanced at the town in the distance.
“Fine, but let us withdraw a little bit from here. I would prefer not to have the countryside in a fit if word gets out that we are both here. Besides, time is limited. You and I both know that.”
“Very well. Follow us, human. We have much to tell you.”
***
Five more miles vanished in a moment as all three moved in a line, dodging trees and ruining fields as they ran through them, knocking down crops from their speed. Finally, both gods slowed down, and Max joined them, his mind racing at everything he wanted to know.
Bob… like… if you could… now would be the time to appear.
“What is your name?”
Turning his attention to Phaius, Max smiled.
“Do you want the name I’ve hidden under or my real name?”
“We do not have time for games,” Ockrim growled. “Every minute costs us dearly to be here and draws the attention of one we do not want. Now speak.”
“Fine,” Max replied. “Max Hoste, though I hid under the name Seth Pendal.”
Both gods glanced at each other before breaking out in laughter, each of them holding their stomachs as they roared and howled.
“Seth… Seth Pendal…” Ockrim said between breaths. “What… What are the odds?”
“That man… was a thorn in our sides…” Phaius managed to get out. “What are the odds indeed?”
“I’m missing something,” Max complained. “For two gods pressed for time, you’ve spent a good half minute laughing at something I have no idea about. Now tell me, why must I be alive and who is this Wekime.”
Wiping a wet spot under his eye, Phaius nodded, his mood changing in a moment.
“Yes. Time is important. Wekime is one of the old gods. Far stronger than most, limited in ways even we do not know of, but if one was to ever go against him, they would hope the other gods of the system would kill them first. For Wekime to find you… and to capture you…”
Both Ockrim and Phaius shuddered.
“He would make you wish for death long before it ever came… if it ever came,” the dwarf stated.
“You know what you are. A bearer of a black skill. Do you know how many there are?”

“Three,” Max answered, watching as Phaius nodded.
“Correct. You have to have either Consume or Devour. I’m assuming it’s Consume as I have not received any notifications of you attempting to affect me yet.”
“Consume… Tell me, boy… how many have you killed?”
Sighing, Max looked at Ockrim and saw a frown as he asked that question.
“Only those elves foolish enough to try and kill me because I’m a human or the ones in the arena who didn’t surrender.”
“Bah, you don’t have to lie to me, boy! We know how the skill works! Even now, I’m surprised you haven’t—”
“I’m not a killer,” Max growled. “I’m not like whatever you think I should be. I didn’t ask for this skill, and I didn’t want it, but it doesn’t control me.”
He studied both gods, who were watching him, eyes flickering between each other, a conversation seeming to take place though no words were spoken.
“I have only defended myself and those that I love and call family. Anyone foolish enough to attempt to attack us, like Phaius and the queens, is on my radar.”
“That’s impossible,” the dwarf stated again. “No one controls the skill. It does exactly what its name is. It consumes them, turning them into rampaging murderers, seeking power through the death and destruction of anyone and everything that gets in their way. The last time—”
“I’m different,” Max said again.
Phaius stood there, his arms crossed, slowly bobbing his head.
“He is… look at him. Even now, he’s not reacting. And seeing him like this, having the skill he has, making the claim that he did. We can’t kill him now.”
“Boy… for the love of the gods…”
Groaning at the words he had just spoken, he ignored both gods, who chuckled slightly.
“I am not *he* or *him* or *boy* ! I’m someone who was given this skill for whatever reason, and I have not lost myself to its hunger. And trust me… I felt the hunger.”
“I am sorry… Max,” Phaius said slowly. “Forgive us. In all our time… none have resisted the skills. Each time when a skill is unleashed, it is hunted down, hoping to cut it off before it grows too strong.”
“Because of what it can become?”
“Not just that,” he continued. “But because if it is allowed to reach a certain strength, another one is unleashed. After that… all three are loosed upon all the worlds.”
“If he is this strong, Phaius, then surely that must mean the other two are also growing. We’ll need to inform the others.”
Both gods scowled at something Max could only guess at, something neither wanted to do.
“Why? What is so bad about this? About the three skills?” Max asked.
“The end of everything if one skill is left unchecked.”
He felt his eyes twitch at how casually Phaius had said those words.
“Has this happened before? I mean—”
“There is no more time,” Ockrim said. “We need to go. Any longer and she will come, and things will become far worse.”
“Who is she?” he asked.
“The goddess of the elves… I prefer not to say her name lest she be listening right now. No doubt she will have sensed us both coming to this world at the same time.”
“Forgive us, Max. I… I am sorry for the game you have been ensnared in. Worlds are at war, gods seek vengeance, and someone has used you as a pawn to fight me, endangering every other world and god in the process.”
He paused and looked at Ockrim, who had just huffed.
“Someone has willingly given much to change the landscape of everything, and only a fool or someone with a plan far greater than we see now is taking a chance. Now, we must go, but here, take this.”
He flipped a gold coin, and Max caught it in one hand, seeing that it was just an ordinary coin from this world.

“You offered me that, and I’ll give it back. Know I shall try to find you in the coming days. We… will do what we can to help you survive, and there needs to be more conversations in the days to come. For now… be careful and… forgive me for what you have endured. It may seem impossible for you to believe, but had I known you had the power to resist the skill, I might have…” Phaius paused and shook his head. “No. Even then I probably would have done what I did, trying to protect my world and the others. For now, know that I am not seeking your death. Instead I need to find out who has used you as a pawn to hurt me and this world.”
“Hurt this world?”
“There is no time. Later, I shall find you, and we shall talk. Do not lose that coin.”
“Take this as well,” Ockrim added as he tossed an emblem to Max.
Catching the metal, he could immediately tell it was unlike anything he had seen in this world by the power that radiated from it. His skill in weapon crafting told him it was far stronger than any substance he had ever seen.
“If you need help… find the one who is king of my people here. Show them that. It will grant you an audience and assistance… just know… no human has ever possessed one.”
Opening his mouth to speak, a boom sounded, and the dwarven god vanished, leaving just Max and Phaius in the middle of a field.
“Be safe, Max, and try to resist the urge for as long as you can. I… I will visit when I can.”
Another boom rang out, and he found himself alone, standing near two sections of dirt, each cracked and broken, sunken over a foot from whatever power the two gods had put out.
Damn you, Bob... I really could have used you.
Turning, Max ran back toward town.

8 Chapter 338 - A Town Hero

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Chapter 338 - A Town Hero
Every step took him back toward town and his friends, yet each moment was lost in thought, as he battled countless problems and conflicts about everything he knew.
If Phaius isn’t bad, then who is? Why do neither of the gods want Thuyja to arrive? How strong are the other skills, and who has them?
Unable to come to any answers and knowing that things were probably not going well in Windsor Wheel, Max began to run, trying not to ruin any more crops than he had to and even killing a few goblins that happened to be on the way.
As he approached the town, he slowed, seeing smoke rising in different sections and the panic that filled those huddled outside in groups.
“What’s going on?” Max asked as a pair of guards rushed by, carrying a bleeding child to a pair of adventurers who were healing those brought to them.
“Some buildings collapsed, sir, and…”
The older guard, his salt-and-pepper hair now messy from the exertion he was putting out, looked up, seeing Max and how he appeared.
“You’re Seth Pendal.”
His voice sounded like a question, but that statement brought the eyes of everyone who had heard, a few gasps and repeating of his name.
Nodding, Max gave a small smile.
“Where can I help?”
“There are plenty of wounded in there but—”
“I’m on it,” Max said, waving and casting an air spear, jumping and landing on it before sending it streaking across the sky, trying not to laugh or grin as people called out “ *He’s flying* ” as he made his way into town.

Looking down at the city, he could see that centered around the temple, multiple buildings had collapsed. Near the ruins were his four party members, all pulling people out and moving them safely into the street.
Even with all the chaos below, the smoke from where a few fires had started, apparently put out by a mage smart enough to use ice magic to extinguish it, was a red-headed elven woman giving orders and moving gracefully. Near her was Batrire, the glow of her healing helping those who were brought to her by Fowl and Cordellia.
Heroes through and through…
Trying not to cause a fuss, he started to fall, casting his Demonic Teleportation and appearing in a small alleyway, running to join his friends.
“Tanila!”
All four turned, seeing him as he came, eyes filled with questions that all of them held off asking.
“What do you need me to do?”
“There’s a group of people hurt to the south. We’re bringing them here where it is safe,” their mage replied. “Fowl has the north, and Cordellia is taking the west. A group of guards has the east.”
Nodding, he turned, racing in the direction she told him, not wasting time.
Multiple buildings had been toppled, no matter if they were stone or wood, all impacted by a force that radiated from the temple.
I caused this… or I guess my ability did… by preventing Phaius from coming here. If he tried and managed to stop, then I guess he saved these people.
Shuddering at what it might have meant had the human god forced himself to appear here, and how much potential destruction and death might have occurred, Max found himself frowning.
Bob… I really need you… Everything I know… It’s not… true?
Silence was his only reply, and he was thankful to see where he could help.
A pair of men were shouting, yelling, and calling out to a group of low-level adventurers, trying to lift some wooden beams that had collapsed and blocked an entrance to a large shop.
“Lift together! We can do it!”
Unable to hide the grin that appeared, Max recognized the overweight barber who had given him his first haircut, calling for the five adventurers to help.
No matter how hard they all worked together, the beam wasn’t moving, and Max’s Sonar could see that another beam was blocking it.
“Let me help,” Max said as he slowed down, seeing the group of five and the barber turn as he spoke.
Theodore the [Barber] scrunched his eyebrows as he saw the bald-headed adventurer approach.
“It’s stuck,” the dwarven warrior called out. “We can’t budge it.”
“I know, just give me a second, I’ll take care of it.”
Letting his Sonar skill tell him about the structure of the stone and wood shop, Max could see that if he pulled the beam out completely, a section of the roof would cave in near the entrance.
“We can’t move that, or the roof will fall in. Let me see what I can see.”
Jumping high into the air, Max spotted an opening in the roof and a wooden floor strewn with debris.
[Demonic Teleportation]
Appearing on the floor, he turned and sensed the huddle of ten or more people in the shop.
Two were injured, and one was a young child, no more than five years old, with a blood-soaked cloth put against her head.
“Let me help,” Max said as he moved toward the group, which all looked startled at his sudden appearance.
“She… she is unconscious,” the woman he assumed was the girl’s mother got out, sniffing between words. Trails of tears ran down her dust-covered face. “A part of the roof hit her.”

He didn’t wait, pulling a greater healing potion from storage and pulling the cork.
“Let me help.”
A simple mouthful was put in, and the tiny bit that dribbled down her lips and chin brought murmurs of shock from the others gathered nearby.
Closing her mouth, he kept it sealed, watching the child finally swallow, and her body glowed.
“Momma?”
Both of her eyes were open, and the light streaming through the hole in the roof reflected the blue color.
“My baby!” the woman exclaimed, tears streaming down her face as she hugged the now-struggling child. “You’re okay!”
“Stop, Momma! You’re squishing me!”
Laughing, the mother let her child go, wiping tears as her daughter sat up.
Max didn’t wait, moving to an older woman whose arm was broken.
“Here. Drink some of this.”
“Please, don’t waste that on me,” the spindly old woman pleaded. “I can’t ever repay what that must cost.”
“It’s free, just for today. Now drink, please, so I can help get all of you out of here,” Max replied, winking at her. “Unless of course, you prefer to stay in a building that might cave in at any moment.”
Coughing, the older woman winced and then nodded, accepting his potion and drinking half of it.
“By Phaius’s arse!” she exclaimed. “What is in that?!”
“Family secret,” Max replied, holding out a hand and helping the woman to stand, her broken arm having already healed.
“Who are you?”
Max turned and saw an older man who was wearing an apron with the same logo as the sign that had fallen off the storefront on it.
“Seth Pendal. Now then, if you all will do me a favor. I need to get you out so I can try to help some others. Gather here. I’ll protect you, and forgive me, sir, but your shop may not be the same.”
“Why wouldn’t it…”
Before the worker could finish his question, Max summoned a stone wall and an ice wall, not caring right now who knew what he could do. The area they were in was on the verge of collapsing, and each one provided support to the weakened section.
Gasps came, and he sensed the people shrinking back from him slightly.
“Please stay close; that section may fall at any moment. We need to get out now.”
Moving to the entrance, he summoned an air wall and carefully set it under the section of the roof he knew would fall in.
“Everyone, stand here. In a moment, I will clear this section of the wall. After that, you’ll need to move quickly before it possibly falls in.”
“Let’s go, baby,” the mother said, moving to where Max was and starting the throng of others who fell in line.
“Theodore! Move away from the entrance! We’re coming out!”
He could hear and sense the group moving away, and when he knew they were gone, Max grabbed one of the beams and deposited it in his storage the moment he lifted it.
A few boards fell and with a deftness and speed none could see, he caught them, tossing each one to the side so fast it was a blur for all those who were near.
The last set of beams was next, and Max pointed at them as he retrieved a large shield as big as himself from storage and held it over his head.
“Everyone close. This part will get tricky.”
Like baby chicks under their mother hen’s wings, they gathered close, and Max used one hand to quickly remove the two beams, storing them and deflecting all the pieces that fell with his shield or free hand.
You could have easily repaired this building in a few moments. Starting with the weaker sections…

And then I would be dealing with tons of requests to repair others while also sharing what I can do. For now, I'll do this the old fashion way.
Once the doorway was clear, he led them to it and out.
Like a flood, they raced by, thank-yous called out as each one found safety from the building.
"Everyone needs to move further away. It's going to cave in," Max said as he left the building.
"Are you certain? Is anyone else inside?"
Shaking his head, Max knew it was empty, his Sonar telling him everything about the building he needed to know.
Dismissing both the ice and stone wall caused the roof behind to cave in, a cloud of dust blowing out the open doorway he was standing in.
Amidst the coughs and the people moving about, Max felt the approach of the barber.
"Is it really you, boy? I mean… you've grown so fast."
Laughing, he nodded and held out a hand to the large man, giving a smile.
"It is. You still the best barber in all of Windsor Wheel?"
"Please, you flatter me… but Seth… *the* Seth Pendal… Champion of the Colosseum, first to break past the fiftieth floor in so long and—"
Holding up his hands, Max stopped Theodore from the titles that continued to flow.
"Yes, but I need to go and help the others who need it. Don't worry, I'll swing by later if you've got time and get a quick razor even though I don't really need it."
Blubbering and words not coming out the barber nodded, his face lighting up like the sun as he grinned.
Giving a quick wave, Max moved a few yards and pulled the pieces of the building out of storage, setting them carefully on the ground. He tried his best to ignore the looks and comments he got from those as he handled the long beams like a stick.
A little further to the south he saw others calling out for help, and without waiting any longer, set off to offer his aid.
***
Everyone was watching and waiting, their eyes and expressions not hiding the questions each of his party members had.
Finishing the drink that he had been given by Pete, Max was grateful for the dwarf giving them a private room to eat and dine in as the whole town was abuzz with what had happened and how their party had assisted so much.
"I can see you won't let me wait any longer before answering your questions. So who wants to go first?"
"What in the gods happened?" Fowl asked, using his hands to mimic his words. "One minute you were inside, the next the city shook like the ground was going to erupt like a volcano!"
Tsking his tongue to his teeth, Max nodded.
"So I have a skill which blocks others… or gods who have the ability to teleport in. I didn't realize what happens when someone has a higher skill and it overwrites mine. The destruction that takes place is a side effect, I think."
"But who…" Fowl started to ask, blinking as a rare train of thought began to form. "Phaius?"
Max nodded and pulled out the gold coin the god had given him.
"I offered this and said a prayer. Apparently, it caught his attention… or I did… or something had, and when he tried to appear, that caused a problem. So he stopped trying to come into town, not wanting to injure people or destroy it and instead appeared outside the range I had set."
Their dwarven warrior rubbed his eyes, letting out a groan.
"Gods… I mean… bah, you know what I mean!"
"Oh, you had it right the first time," Max replied with a grin. "Now sit back and let me just tell everything as it happened."

9 Chapter 339 - The Return of Bob https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2032490/chapter-339-the-return-of-bob ;[2025-01-28 11:02]

Chapter 339 - The Return of Bob

“Eventually, you’re going to have to give it back,” Max informed his dwarven friend.
“I know,” Fowl muttered. “Still… you saw Ockrim, and he gave you this… Tell me you can feel it calling out to you, almost as if it’s your mother’s voice telling you dinner is ready.”
Batrire let out a shudder as she nodded.
“He’s right my love, give it back. The longer you hold it, the more you’ll desire it.”
A weird grin came over Fowl’s face as he ran a finger along the coin’s edge.
“I know…. It’s like it’s precious to me. Like I want it to be my precious.”
Max’s finger snapped, and the glossy-eye look that had filled their warrior’s face was freed. He frowned, handing the coin to his friend.
“I think I’ll store this for a bit,” he said, putting it away. “Now then, Tanila, you’ve been far too quiet. What are you thinking?”
She frowned, looking up from a book she had pulled out.
“Read this,” she replied and pushed the book to Max.
“Bloody crazy he can read that now,” Fowl muttered as Max picked up the old tome she had failed to return when they departed Peltagow.
*****
… Mother Thuyja has demanded we cleanse the filth that plagues our world. She comes every blood eclipse, bringing gifts of power to those who faithfully follow her. Those who prove their worth by obeying her commands will be blessed. The chosen few might join her, proclaiming the truth of her power and ridding other worlds that shall fall under her domain.
Long live Mother Thuyja!
Praise the blessed name!
Seek the death of those not of our own.
Take back the land regardless of how many must be slain.
*****
Part of me wishes I didn’t have the ability to read this now. Is this why Phaius and Ockrim didn’t want her to come? How much stronger could she really be?
Taking a deep breath and letting it out slowly, he glanced up at Tanila and saw the tears in her eyes.
“It makes sense now,” she whispered. “So many times I simply thought this was a group of my people who misunderstood Thuyja. Now I see why my parents and others have made the moves they did.”
“Will someone tell us what we’re missing?” Fowl asked after tapping the table.
“Basically, my god wants us to kill everyone who doesn’t worship her and then to travel to other worlds, repeating it again and again.”
“Dear go… err, never mind. So now what?”
Max shrugged at his friend’s question and turned to Batrire who was sitting quietly, gently stroking her beard.
“Tomorrow, we will continue Max’s plan,” she stated when he motioned to her. “After he does whatever it is he must at his home, we return to ours, and someone puts a ring with a large gem set in it on my finger.”
In a moment, the somber mood in the room changed, and everyone smiled as Fowl leaned over and pulled her beard, bringing her close and kissing her.
“I cannot wait, my love.”
Keeping a smile he knew was only slightly forced, Max saw Tanila’s cheek twitch, a rare thing for her, and knew she was struggling with the shattering of a truth she had long held, just as he was.

Gods are never simple, I guess. If Thuyja is one of the bad ones, could she have done this? Or—
“Max?” Fowl called out.
“Sorry, I was thinking about what we’re going to do tomorrow when we arrive in Alundra. What’s up?”
“I was going to ask if you were ready to head to bed?”
Seeing how the two dwarves were gently playing with each other’s facial hair, Max knew exactly why his friend was asking that question.
“That sounds like a good plan. We can deal with some of this while we’re on the road. For now, a good night’s rest sounds like what we all need.”
***
“What was it really like?”
Running his hands through her red hair, Max let his Sonar skill see everything about Tanila in the room’s darkness.
The rising of her chest as she breathed, leaning against him in the crook of his arm, and how much further her feet extended past his. Everything was a joy after having missed her all those months, and it didn’t matter how small it was; he cherished each second with her.
“Even as strong as I am, I’m nothing compared to their power,” he replied. “Each of them had two different auras. One was overwhelming when just wearing whatever kind of clothes they had on, and then a totally different one came when they were prepared to fight. It was almost impossible to move it was so oppressive.”
She shuddered and ran her finger across his defined abs.
“And yet both appeared anxious about Thuyja showing up?”
“Yes. As if she might be able to go against both of them. It was unnerving. They fled so fast, not wanting to draw her. Now I have so many questions, and with Bob not here, I’m lost on who to ask.”
“I wonder how long it will take for *Bob* to return. In the meantime, are we really going to hide who we are in your hometown?”
“We are. I checked with Peter, and he found out that in four days, the crystal shard is expected back in Alundra. I can’t promise I’ll behave, but I have to make sure that my sister is okay. That and I…”
Words stopped coming as a lump formed in his chest. The idea of returning home and seeing how his parents were doing hurt more than he could admit.
“It’s okay. I’m here,” Tanila said as she wrapped her arm around him, pulling closer to his side.
“Last I heard it wasn’t good. It hurts, and I’m angry, and they won’t like it when I’m angry.”
A snort came, and Max felt some of the tightness in his chest dissipate as Tanila sat up and kissed his cheek.
“Trust me, they will like me even less if they get me upset. Now let’s sleep. Tomorrow is going to be a hard day.”
***
Max, we need to talk.
Blinking, he found himself sitting in a room unlike any he could ever remember. Across from the stone chair he was in was an alter-image of himself in a matching seat.
It had hair, fine dark hair, red eyes and a familiar aura that radiated from it. Clothes that looked finer than any he owned adorned the being. A smile he knew all too well was upon his lips as the image tapped its fingers together.
“Bob?”
I hate that name, but yes. Forgive me, it has been longer than I anticipated, but I have returned, and there is much we need to discuss.
“Phaius and Ockrim, they—”
I know. Everything you know, I know, and if there were a way for me to do the opposite, I would allow you to see and understand everything I do. However, it appears I am unable to do so yet. Regardless, it would shatter

your mind. Much of what I have not been able to recall has returned, and there is still much that is locked behind the final wall, waiting for my final evolution.
Shaking his head, Max studied the skill he now talked with and had come to learn to work with. Gone was the raging hunger that had always attempted to control him. Instead, it was something different.
“You’ve changed. What happened?”
We do not have time if you plan on waking up as expected. There will be other nights for us to talk and for me to share more, but some things need to be discussed first.
Bob snapped his fingers, and a map appeared in the air off to his side, the location of where they were, and it quickly began to zoom out. Soon it was like the map on Everett’s wall, showing most of the kingdom and then the three kingdoms. Eventually it zoomed out more, showing the very world they were living on, spinning slowly showing all the different land and water masses.
Yes, this is our world, and as you can see, there is much you have not even explored yet. Perhaps you will get a chance in time, but that is not the most important thing right now. You need to give up this foolish quest and get stronger faster. Ockrim and Phaius are right. The other two skills are out there in different worlds, and they are growing.
It is a good thing I came first because with how slow you have grown, they would have outpaced us. Our trip to the other world provided us with a small lead again, I believe, but there will be a time when that shall vanish if we do not increase our pace.
“You’re saying I can’t go and protect my sister?”
Bob sighed and shook his head slowly.
It is not wise, but I also know that you will not change your mind. Whatever you hope to learn there isn’t worth the time it might take to see that path to its end. And this nonsense about a wedding, it is—
“Not going to change my mind, and you know it,” Max interrupted. “Tell me what is useful, and stop with the nonsense if you know me so well. What has happened to you? Why did it take so long to return? What is different?”
A grimace came over Bob and he rubbed his eyes for a moment.
You never change, and while there was a slim chance I might be able to convince you otherwise, it appears you are as stubborn as a mule.
Folding his hands together, his skill leaned back against the stone chair and motioned to the world still spinning near him.
I will answer a few questions and then tell you what I must. We can talk more during the day on occasion, but I am still weak. You have not been hunting as I had hoped, and there is a pool of power that is dry, as vast as all the water of your world that needs to be filled before I can reach the next stage of my growth.
Unable to help himself, Max let out a whistle.
“That… is a lot. Is that even possible?”
Perhaps. The tower is aware of you, and so are other worlds. Whatever comes next, know there are conversations about you taking place. While I was gone, my power to interact with the system was there for just a moment. I’m not certain if the ones who sit at the center of it all know this or do not care, yet I could catch whispers of your name and my siblings, moves being made across all the worlds as they prepare for what may come.
“Like Ockrim talked about?”
Bob’s head moved up and down, and he frowned.
Those two are old enough to have seen a few variations of our summoning. They know the dangers of not stamping out the first one that is let loose. Neither of them appear foolish enough or strong enough to spend the kind

of power required to bring about our rebirth. To do so is beyond their means.
“Thuyja?”
Perhaps. I am not aware of how strong she is, but based on what you know and the little I can recall, she is older and stronger than them both, yet she is not one I would consider foolish enough to risk such a thing on her own world. Perhaps she hoped I would be in an elf or that she could make me an offer to partner with her.
Either of those is risky and dangerous, as I am different than I can remember being in so long.
“Not a murder hobo who wants to kill everything and everyone to get stronger?”
Max couldn’t help but smile as the room echoed with laughter.
Bob took a moment, lost in time, a few tears trickling down his cheeks as he roared with a release that Max had never witnessed before.
You… Max Hoste… have allowed me to be something I remember only a little bit. It has been so long, but there was a time… a time when I wasn’t completely overwhelmed by the power that I am. A time when I was simply just a god.

10 Chapter 340 - How Many Women Does Max Have?

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A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

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Chapter 340 - How Many Women Does Max Have?
“A god? As in like Phaius and Ockrim?”
Shaking his head, Bob chuckled and frowned.
I was never like them. Wekime… that is a name I know. There are others like him, old ones, ancient ones who came after me and my siblings. A time before something I cannot remember. So much is missing, and yet I can recall a few threads.
His fingers snapped, and the boom that came from them would have deafened someone had it been real.
Gone was the world that had been spinning; instead, the entire place they had been reclining in was replaced with countless galaxies and systems, spinning around them in the darkness of space.
There was a time that these places were mine. Somewhere out there is a world I call home… or, I called home. If it still stands, I do not know, but what I can tell you is that perhaps if we can overcome the other two skills, I can search for it and see what remains.
Max’s eyes moved constantly, trying to take in everywhere around him, turning on his seat and looking over his shoulder and behind.
“How many? I mean… how strong… or—”
Not questions for now, but know there was a time when only two others were equal in power, and now the three of us are bound by a single thread, destined to fight for some reason over and over. Why? I have no idea. That is what bothers me the most.
Bob’s fingers snapped again, and the room returned to an empty room of only their two chairs.

I know you will do what you want, but trust me when I say, I am here to help. You have somehow broken something I cannot recall ever being broken. Perhaps there was another like you, not overcome with the desire to make themself stronger. You have allowed me to evolve from the *murder hobo* as you call it to something with a mind that sees the value in what you do.

So go protect your family. If everything goes as you hope, enjoy a few days with them. Take those two dwarves and let them get married, but then return to the tower. You cannot stay out of it too long. There is too much to do, and you need strength. Your friends need to get stronger if they are going to survive what is coming for you.

A frown appeared on Max's face, and Bob shook his head, waving his hands at that expression.

"What do you mean what is coming for me?"

Yawning, his skill shrugged and motioned to the ceiling. The stone bricks disappeared, and sunlight started streaming through the open space, washing them in the light.

Many are looking for you, all for different reasons. That dragon was wise to mark you and form the pact. Others will want to control you, some foolish enough to threaten you or your allies.

Bob held up his hand and stopped Max, who was about to reply.

As I mentioned, fools. Still, some will offer the carrot as you call it, seeking to make you an ally through gifts. When they come, we will discuss those options and try to find the best path for you and your friends. Just know, from here on out, no more pacts unless we both agree on it. The potential for limiting yourself and what you can do is great. A mistake can be costly, especially if the system deems you to break such a thing. That is why the gold dragon was very careful about the wording of the pact. Both of you can go against the other if either of you or your children and loved ones are in danger. How that is interpreted… well that is the tricky part.

Wincing, Max rubbed his temple.

"But… no… never mind. Thank you for coming back. I missed you."

Bob's head cocked sideways for a moment, and then his reflection began to slowly nod.

Max Hoste… if I am honest, a part of me missed you. I believe what you are implying is a friend… something more than an ally, and I… I cannot remember having a friend. There was a time I am certain I must have had one.

"Well, you have one now," Max replied, standing up from his chair and moving toward Bob with his hand out. "Together, we'll keep my family safe, and I'll do what I can to help you figure out what happened to you."

A grin appeared upon his skill's face, one that didn't convey any evil or a hint of malice as some had, but instead joy.

There in a small stone room, the two shook hands, smiling at each other.

Wake up, Max. Tanila is waiting on you.

***

"It's time, Max. Get up!"

Groaning, he blinked, seeing Tanila sitting on his chest, her red hair spilling out over her chest as she shook his head slightly.

"Well, that's one way to get me up," Max replied, reaching up and pulling her close. After he released her from the kiss, she smiled and studied him.

"You look different… almost as if… Bob! Bob is back?!"

Laughing, he nodded and saw the look on her face.

"It's okay. He's not some bloodthirsty murder hobo anymore. He said that because of me, he doesn't have the same hunger he once had."

"You're calling your skill a person. Is that what you think it is?"

Shrugging, Max started to sit up, easily lifting her as he scooted up on the bed.

“I do. Just know he will help me protect you all. But unless you want to lie naked in bed all day with me, we need to get dressed and prepare to leave. Something tells me that we need to head out, and I have just a few last stops before I do.”
Rolling her eyes, Tanila poked him in the chest before sliding off his legs.
“For someone who said he had no friends, you sure have a lot of people to check in with at every town we visit.”
“What can I say? I’m a likable guy.”
***
“Last stop, I promise,” Max said as they approached the enchanting shop.
“He promised,” Fowl joked. “For a moment, I wondered if he was checking in on all the women in a harem.”
Batrire laughed, and Tanila let out another groan like she had the last time their warrior had joked about it.
“He’s right,” Cordellia said. “That poor dwarf girl was almost in tears when she saw you hanging on his arm. I’m still not certain Max understands how much that adventurer woman must have liked him. What was her name?”
“Greta,” Tanila said loudly, smiling when Max sighed.
“Yes, Greta. And what about that blacksmith… the arms on her,” their ranger continued, changing her voice to mimic their resident bald womanizer. “I’ve come to give you a load of ore for all your help back then. Hopefully, you’ll be able to use all of this.”
Fowl began to cough, nodding.
“That girl… she almost fainted. I mean a dwarf would have fainted. Most dwarven fathers would have made him marry their daughter for giving them a load that big.”
Batrire started to choke, unable to control herself at her man’s comment.
“You four stop, or I’m sending you back to the cart,” Max stated. “I promise you, I didn’t sleep with any of these women or promise them anything. I’m just repaying a few small debts like I did to Gerald, the armor merchant. He was a guy!”
“I’m not saying anything about who you sleep with, guy or girl,” Cordellia replied. “I’m just saying, I’d bet a gold coin that whoever we’re about to see is probably some attractive woman he made a promise to.”
Max’s foot missed the step up the stairs, and it took every bit of his agility to keep from falling on his face.
“She’s right!” Fowl howled, starting to laugh. “A woman’s in there!”
“Max… do you need to tell me something?” Tanila asked with a wink. “Is this woman going to swoon over you like the others did?”
His whole head was red, and the group of four all burst out in laughter, each seeing how embarrassed he really was.
“Listen, she inspected my spear… I mean weapon!”
It was too late. His words had already hit home, and Fowl was starting to cough, tears running like rivers as the dwarf turned beet red. Next to him, their ranger was gasping for air, holding her sides and obviously having caught the unintended word play.
“Your spear, huh?”
Holding both hands out, Max waved off Tanila, who was playing it up, glaring at him and causing Batrire to wipe her cheeks from the wetness that covered them.
“Is everything alright?”
Max winced, knowing who was standing behind him at the shop’s entrance. He sensed her approach and how she was dressed.
Each of his party members went deathly silent, their howls of laughter cut off as they gazed upon the woman who owned the shop.
He had forgotten that even though the woman was old enough to be his mother, she was attractive. Her hair was done up, and now his Sonar skill left no doubt about the figure that her dress displayed.
Each of the four glanced once more at the woman and then at Max, and all four of them gave in, laughing again, not concerned about how the people on the street or the enchantress were staring at them.

“Forgive them, please, Winnifred. I’ve come to keep my promise.”
When Max turned and smiled at her, the woman’s green eyes went wide, and her mouth opened up slightly. Her dress was almost the same shade of green as the first one he saw her in, and with a slight bow he moved up the last few steps.
“Seth? The same Seth I helped flee our town? The Seth who helped our town yesterday? The Seth—”
“I’m that guy,” he replied, cutting off her line of questions everyone in town always seemed to have. “I made a promise, and so here it is.”
Without waiting and a bit of flair, Max held out the bracers she had identified for him almost a year ago. Their black color was just as dark, and the three gold stars still stood out, looking just as new as the day he had laid them on her counter.
“You’re serious? I mean… I never expected you to return and keep that promise… or even remember my name.”
“Fear not,” Tanila called out, her voice a little higher than usual as she spoke. “He never forgets a beautiful face.”
Winnifred’s face cracked, and the woman smiled upon seeing Max’s cheeks go red.
“It would appear not. Still, this is far too great of a gift. I cannot accept these.”
“If you don’t, I’ll drop them here, and then anyone who picks them up can have them,” Max replied. “I would have brought that spear, but it isn’t around anymore. Still, I owe you for helping me survive and get out of town safely. For that, this gift is the least I can offer.”
The enchantress tapped her lip, smiling and shaking her head slowly as she studied him and then the four who were all still enjoying the event playing out before them.
“Your party?”
“My family.”
A wide smile appeared, and she nodded, reaching out and taking the bracers from him.
“Then it appears you were worth saving, Seth Pendal. I am grateful for your gift, and our town appreciates what you five did yesterday. Part of me wonders why it happened when you appeared, but then again it seemed wherever you went, something crazy always took place.”
“Gods, she knows him too well,” Fowl called out.
Smacking his lips, Max turned and glared at his friend before returning his attention to Winnifred.
“We need to go, but I wanted to say thank you again. If you ever need…” He paused and held out a blank, black card to her. “Identify that, and you’ll find the name of someone to contact. They’ll help you if you ever decide to move to the capital.”
Winnifred’s eyes widened a little as she took the card. She realized it was a thin piece of metal and began to grin as soon as she recognized it.
“You better run, Seth, or that woman behind you with the red hair might hurt you. From how she looks at you, I can see that you’re hers, and I doubt I would want to fight her for you.”
“No, you don’t,” Tanila replied. “Thank you again for what you did, but if we don’t get him out of here, I’m certain we’ll never leave this town.”
With a last wave, Max made his way down the steps and to the carriage waiting on them, knowing that his time in Windsor Wheel was finally over for now.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

don’t forget to check out soul guardian like I linked above because it’s been something I’ve been reading the last few days to kind of help deal with some personal family things.

nothing like a fun slice of life to just gonna take your mind off of stuff

11 Chapter 340a - Failed Plans

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2034441/chapter-340a-failed-plans;[2025-01-28 14:54]

Chapter 340a - Failed Plans

The sound of fists striking the stone wall rang out again, and yet in the corridor, no one heard them but the one being stupid and the other watching.

“You’re being foolish again. Our plan hasn’t failed and there is—”

Like a bolt of lightning, the cloaked figure moved, almost quicker than light, their hand grabbing their partner’s neck and pressing them against the wall.

“Everything is going wrong! What we planned has not worked out! Now all three are loose, and the entire system is looking for us!”

Even though the force would have shattered and killed most, she stood there, uninjured and only a frown, which displayed her displeasure at such a barbaric response.

“I will only warn you once. Take your hands off me, or the truth of what we have done will come from my own lips, and I will make certain to enjoy watching you suffer.”

Two pairs of eyes, each cold and unwavering, locked before the cloaked figure ripped their hand back from the embrace it had around their partner’s throat.

Shaking her head, she frowned.

“When we decided on this path, we knew there were many ways this could go wrong. No one could have seen the direction it has taken and now”—she paused, glancing down the hallway and verifying that no one else was present—“we will continue to watch. Only when we must will we show our hand. Until then, do not be foolish and attempt to intervene.”

A growl came from under the hood, its material doing what it was designed to do, always keep the face shadowed, unable to be seen or recognized.

“I could squash him like a bug.”

“Yes, and then what would happen to every world? How would the other gods react? There will be a time for him to die, and it must be by the system’s hands. For us to do anything on our own would risk destroying everything.”

“Bah, old stories that no one can prove are real! Even the old gods say nothing about the prophecies and how destruction is guaranteed! What if it is all a lie and there is power to be gained in killing one of the three?”

The itch that had been there as that same thought had been dealt with many times came, and standing there in the hallway, she slowly nodded.

“Then we wait and ensure that is true. Acting before such a moment wouldn’t be wise,” she replied with a grin. “You and I both know we can squash Max like a bug whenever we choose. For now, we let the game we have started play out. Already, one has fallen.”

A chuckle came from under the hood.

“Igarra… she had promise. I cannot fault a woman who rules with such a strong grasp.”

“And yet she is dead. The recording of that fight… it left me… intrigued.”

The sounds of footsteps coming from down the hallway made both of them turn, and each moved apart, not saying another word as they separated.

Walking away, she pulled the hood over her head, eyes sparkling as the memory of that fight between Max and Igarra played again.

He is strong… far stronger than he should be…

12 Chapter 341 - Returning Home https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2036125/chapter-341-returning-home;[2025-01-30 11:13]

Chapter 341 - Returning Home

Each of them laughed, looking at their chosen appearance for this masquerade.
“You look… stunning, my love,” Fowl teased as he winked. “A blond beard… who would have known.”
She shook her head and tapped her head.
“And bald… very brave of you.”
Their warrior laughed and pointed at Max, who was grinning.
“Well, since he has a head of red hair, I figured one of us should be bald to keep the mystery alive.”
Tanila was wincing as she shook her head.
“It feels strange… to see him with a full head of hair,” she admitted. “After so long… I kind of prefer the shaved look.”
“And you two look like twins,” Max stated as he pointed at Cordellia and their mage. “Did you both plan on doing white hair or was it by chance?”
Redness filled their archer’s cheeks.
“I wouldn’t have picked this but she said I shouldn’t change. No one would suspect us of being the party that was down in Windsor Wheel.”
“It’s true,” Tanila replied. “Now, the attendant says they have found the place you told us to go. Are we ready?”
Taking a deep breath, Max nodded and tapped on the carriage door, letting their attendant, who shook their head for a moment, take them in.
“Uh… forgive me. I had not realized the change you promised would be so drastic,” Spencer said. “Fear not. I have already made a mental note of how you look now and still know the passphrase in case one of you approaches with a different appearance.”
Tanila accepted the older human’s hand and stepped down, looking up at the Evening’s Respite, where Max had said they should stay while waiting for the Choosing Day.
Large stone walls were raised up four floors, and the outside looked almost on par with the Heavenly Pineapple. Columns sat near the front entrance where the steps that waited for them to climb had a pair of servants, eyes locked on who would come from the carriage and ready to spring into action.
“Keep moving. I’m ready to stretch my legs,” Fowl called out.
As they filed out, Max took a deep breath. The last one to leave the safety of their ride, he recognized the town instantly, and a longing to run to his parents’ home fought to overwhelm him.
Never have I felt you more conflicted than today. Surely you can’t be this overwhelmed by simple emotions? What happened to the boy willing to die to resist my temptations at greatness and power?
You know what it is. Love.
Yes, I’m well aware of what it is, but the surprise at how it threatens to make you act like a fool is still surprising. Tread carefully. I would not risk exposing yourself to anyone here.
Nodding at no one, Max let his elven friends take an arm, moving up the steps with Fowl and Batrire in tow.
“Good evening, sir!” exclaimed the male attendant on the right. “Welcome to the Evening’s Respite! How may we take care of you today?”
“I need the top floor, all of it,” Max replied, his eyes holding the gaze of the man he recognized but couldn’t remember. “My friends and I will need a private butler and chef and wish to not be disturbed unless we come down on our own.”

“Yes… yes sir!” he exclaimed and snapped his fingers. “I would assume no luggage?”
A simple nod was all he gave, and the other servant moved, opening the door and bowing as they waited for them all to enter.
Inside was a world of wealth in a town that most never witnessed.
This is the father’s place of the boy who got two skills… Their family has been in power for so long that even the mayor defers to them and the money they get from the bank they run as well.
Only a few tables were set up, with fine chairs, and a booth far off had custom woodwork along the walls that provided privacy.
A woman in an expensive dress stood behind the bar, her hair blond, perfectly done, and a well-practiced smile already present. She nodded at them as they came in.
Silver and marble made up the bar, and fancy chairs, with fabrics Max could have never imagined recognizing or even touching lining each of the eight taller seats at the bar. Behind it was a well-polished mirror and a variety of colorful glasses and lightstones, which gave off a magical look.
“Would any of you care for a drink?”
A small grunt came from Fowl, and Max nodded, walking with both Tanila and Cordellia by his side as if all this were beneath him.
“You play this role almost too well,” their mage whispered. “You can see the way she is studying you.”
“I had a good teacher,” he replied, smiling as if she had just told him a joke.
Both women laughed, their light voices carrying across the room.
“We’ll take your booth and some of your finest mead and ale,” Max said, freeing a hand and placing twenty-five gold coins on the counter. “When our floor is ready, we will relocate up there. Here is enough to start the tab for the drinks.”
The woman’s cheeks flushed for just a moment, and then she nodded, motioning for them to move to where Max had mentioned.
“Very well, sir. I shall bring your drinks to you right away! Please relax, and I’ll get some snacks as well.”
Max turned and moved without waiting, leaving the girl and the money as they strode toward the booth.
As they slid in, he studied the room, letting his Sonar pick up everything he could.
“Who is that?”
“I’m not certain,” the male attendant said. “They came in out of nowhere, stopped right outside, and filed out! He asked specifically for the top floor, which most wouldn’t know about.”
“Did you send for the master?”
“Yes!”
Grinning, he pulled out a small magical object that Everett had given him.
A box, no bigger than his thumb but with runes carved all over it, looked lifeless in its dull brown appearance but when he poured just a little bit of mana into it, the runes lit up and a small barrier washed over them.
“We can talk freely now.”
“Gods, Max, you act like a pompous noble! Walking in here with your head high and giving orders like that.”
“Well, we would have let you be the pompous arse, but each of us agreed your intelligence isn’t high enough,” Batrire teased her man. “Besides, I’m not about to let you walk in with two elves on your arms.”
They all chuckled and laughed as their warrior rubbed his bald-looking head.
“So now what?”
Looking at Cordellia, Max shrugged.
“We’ll drink and eat, and I’m certain Mr. Sandahl will be here soon enough. I have no doubt he’ll be anxious to see who has come to his place and tossed gold around like it’s nothing.”
“And after that?” Fowl asked.
“We relax. Later we can walk through part of the city, and I can show you a few things. Besides, we still need to scout the location I sketched out a few days ago.”

Their warrior was about to speak when Max motioned at the servant coming with snacks.
“Pardon me, but would you five like some refreshments while Tiffany finishes collecting your drinks?”
Nodding, they watched as the young girl, perhaps only nineteen or twenty, trembled slightly as she set the tray down on the table and backed away.
“For your trouble,” Max said, sliding a silver coin toward her.
Her blue eyes shook as she stared at the coin, and a wide grin grew.
“Thank you, sir!”
As she walked away, a slight skip in her step, an elbow gently hit his ribs.
“You’re not going to create another following of women, are you?”
***
“Welcome to my establishment, Mr. Gilfer. I am Mr. Sandahl, and if there is anything I can do to improve your stay, please do not hesitate to ask for me!”
The way the older man bent and acted set Max’s hackles on edge. His long brown mustache was greased and formed into handlebars, and the expensive clothes that covered his pudgy body reminded Max of the suit his son had worn on Choosing Day last year.
“I think we shall be good for now,” Max replied. “We may go out and explore the city from time to time, but there will be no need for an escort. I have a few adventurers in my entourage to keep me safe.”
“A wise thing. One can never be too careful when traveling. Just know if you need any help or have business that must be conducted while you are here, my bank is directly connected to the Bank of the Queens in the capital! Anything someone such as yourself might need, I can make sure is acquired.”
Sighing a little before taking a sip of his drink, Max nodded and then cocked his head.
“The decorations outside. A festival?”
“Correct, sir! In just three days, our city will have the choosing shard come through, and each of our youth will be granted their skill to start off their path! Have no worries. This year should be a great year.”
The tone of Sandahl’s voice conveyed something, and Max detected it easily.
“Has there not been some good years?”
Grimacing, the man nodded, wringing both hands slightly.
“I am afraid that even with my own son gaining two skills last year, the whole town was forced to endure a tragic moment.”
Their eyes were locked, and after Max motioned for him to continue, the proprietor took a deep breath and continued.
“We had an unskilled last year…”
Everyone in the table shifted slightly, and Max could feel the gaze of some of his friends for a moment.
“That does seem unfortunate. Does that happen often here?”
“Oh no, sir! Typically, only every three or four years, so this year should be a great year indeed! Now then, instead of discussing such terrible things, is there anything else I can get you?”
Shaking his head, Max pointed upward.
“I’m assuming our floor is ready?”
“Absolutely! I will have Tiffany escort you up there whenever you are ready!”
Glancing at the others, they each nodded, and Max moved to stand up.
“Then have her lead us there now. We’re ready for a little privacy and rest.”
***
“This isn’t a bad view,” Tanila stated as the five of them stood on their private balcony overlooking a portion of the city. “While not the tallest structure we’ve been on, it does give one a glimpse of how far the town goes in two directions.”
Max nodded, holding her close as he stared out over the houses and businesses that filled the town he had called home most of his life. They still had three or four hours of good light before the sun would set, but he couldn’t take his eyes off the area he knew everything would be centered around in the coming days.

“That’s a lot of decorations,” Fowl muttered as he leaned against the stone railing. People are still putting up stuff.”
“It’s a big thing here,” Max replied. “Your whole life comes down to this one moment, and if it doesn’t turn out how you think… one might find themselves on a path they didn’t expect.”
“Still seems so different,” Cordellia stated. “In our kingdom, you simply visit the local adventurer’s house, and there your skills are assigned. Most often, everyone gets what they want, even if they haven’t really said it out loud.”
“Kind of like someone who was expected to be a weapon or armor smith becoming a warrior?” Batrire teased as she hip-checked her man.
“Yeah, that wouldn’t happen, but if it did, no one would care. Each gift has a reason for being given by Thuyja… or at least that’s what I used to think,” their ranger replied.
“What if this is all just random?” Fowl asked. “I mean… could the gods really spend that kind of time directing our paths? Wouldn’t most of the decisions be something destined by whatever rules Max said could be in place for each world?”
Seeing how his dwarven friend was looking at him, Max shrugged.
“All I know is everything I thought I knew a year ago has changed. Regardless, tonight, I need to scout a little bit. You four get some rest. I’ll be back.”

13 Chapter 342 - A Cry in the Night https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2037957/chapter-342-a-cry-in-the-night;[2025-01-31 12:35]

Chapter 342 - A Cry in the Night

It seems humorous how you move across your own hometown like a thief. No one here could probably even injure you and yet you’re hiding and skulking along rooftops.
Max only grinned as Bob continued sharing his thoughts on the reconnaissance that he was doing of the city.
With his stats, moving from rooftop to rooftop was easier than a child playing hopscotch, and each act was so fast that he could have probably done it in daylight and still not been seen.
As you know I’m not ready to reveal myself yet. There is a reason for all this, and I want to make sure that nothing has changed.
It would appear from your memories that the same street hasn’t changed. I agree with your dwarf friend. There are far too many decorations for a moment like this. Surely by now, you realize that the system is simply based on percentages and chances. Everything I have been able to remember and deduce points to your race doing what it can to increase the chance of learning a specific skill. Though it does appear that something may have been implemented that hinders the number of fighting skills for humans.
Partially paying attention to Bob, Max leaped across the main road and stared at the steps he had taken a year ago, seeing the very spot where the skill shard had rested. The memory of it all played over and from his perch on a roof. He absently rubbed the side of his jaw where the woman had punched him.
It’s like I can remember it all perfectly.
His eyes scanned the street, seeing the place his parents had stood, his mother crying, arms extended toward him. His sister was in tears. Gone was the joy they had all planned.
A few feet away were muffins, smashed by a few random feet and the discarded basket of treats.

Inside, the pain of it all was there, and then his vision focused on the corner where the cart had been parked that he had been dumped into.
Anger grew, and his teeth made the slightest noise as he ground them together.
Bob… I have a question: Can you impact or direct the skills someone gets? Sometimes, I was able to consume skills, and other times, I couldn't. And I'm not talking about the times you kept the power for yourself .
A chuckle came inside him, and Max could sense his skill considering that question, and for a moment neither said a word. The light of the quarter moon was almost hidden as a few clouds moved overhead.
Part of me back then is a mystery. What I could do and what I couldn't do was driven more by instinct and desire. Like a hungry animal, I searched for whatever I could, needing and wanting to grow.
Not every being has a skill. Take for example, those early goblins you killed. The one that had the spear skill was rare, and it provided us with something we desperately needed. Imagine if, instead, it had the sword skill. Would you then have been a sword user?
Most likely.
Yet, you acquired that skill because it had it and we needed it. After that there was only a chance that you could acquire skills, and those percentages were varied. In time I might be able to figure them out a little more, but just know, they were not high after you started receiving the first few ones.
Yet the stats? They always came .
Correct, but that is different. Even now you will always gain stats if theirs are higher, but there is no guarantee you will gain a skill. The one thing that does affect that is what you kill. A simple monster has a lower percentage. Killing another person or being has a higher percentage. Then, there is a difference in power. Those who are technically stronger almost guarantee a higher yield of gain.
Like Igarra…
Max shifted on the roof, slipping back into the shadows as the moon escaped its hiding position behind the clouds. A pair of watchmen moved along the main street, quietly chatting, their light stone lanterns illuminating the decorated area that would soon be packed.
Inside, Bob howled with laughter and joy.
That was a harvest unlike any other. She was far beyond us, and yet we managed to defeat her only because you had enough skills to wear her down, and I was willing to empty my power reserves to keep us alive. As such… what we gained was more than we could imagine outside of killing another champion or someone most might call a god.
He took a deep breath very slowly and considered how impossible that seemed after facing Phaius and Ockrim.
That doesn't seem even doable right now… they were… far beyond me.
It is a pity I was still in the process of evolving. You still haven't noticed the changes, either.
[Skill Description - Consume]
*****
Consume - Legendary Skill: When killing a person, creature, or monster, the skill holder has an improved chance to consume some of the essence of the one defeated. Health, Stamina, Mana, Stats, and Skills have a higher chance of being gained against higher-level foes. Stats consumed cannot be acquired if current stats are higher. Skills can be upgraded if a higher skill is consumed. No experience may be gained by killing creatures or others. No experience is gained via quests. Consume has an exceptionally higher chance of consuming bonus stats. Consume has become sapient.
*****

Max felt his eyes blinking at the last line. He hadn't given it any thought to check after Bob had returned, simply glad to have his friend back.
The system acknowledges that you are sapient… what does that mean?
I'm not certain, but it's another thread I'm following. For that to be there means that this is expected. How it knows that means it must be planned, or I would expect something has happened before that led to it being added, which only leads to a hundred other questions.
Like who or what you really are? A "skill" that is sapient… which means that the other two skills are also most likely able to become as you are…
If they are able to become like me, the real question becomes: Are they simply monsters fed by their desires to grow, or are they able to plan and reason? Which is more dangerous?
With the guards moving out of sight, Max stood up and glanced across the city in a specific direction.
Why are you standing still? We both know you'll do it. Just get it over with.
Sighing, he leaped upward, grabbing on to the air spear Bob had summoned, and rode it in the direction both of them knew he had to go.
***
It… is a wreck…
Gazing upon the property he had grown up on, pain radiated in his heart. The fences needed desperate repair, the house looked disheveled, and the yard was overrun with weeds.
He could see that the number of sheep had dwindled down to almost nothing and that the ones still around looked underfed and not cared for as they should be.
This is my fault… I should have sent money or—
No! Do not blame yourself for what was cast upon you. You and I both know you did what needed to be done, and you couldn't help without showing your hand to being alive. Finish what is required, and then you can help them.
Wincing, Max knew Bob was right. Every part of him wanted to run out there, using his Wood Mastery skill to reshape the fences, mend the broken house, and to quickly clean the ground. He could throw endless amounts of gold at this place, making it into the home it had once been, but what really hurt was what he knew.
How much has my family suffered if their home looks like this?
Once again the pain in his chest was lessened as the rage he had to fight each day as they drew closer and closer to Alundra grew.
You shall fix it like you do everything else. Now then, let us return back to your friends. I have no doubt they are anxious and—
A sound in the middle of the night cut Bob off, and Max's heart plummeted off a cliff. There in the darkness over the sound of the occasional sheep that bleated or the blowing of the wind, came something he hadn't expected or imagined.
A baby?
It took a moment for the cry to register in his head, as it came a few more times, and a light illuminated a window frame.
Max moved without waiting and ignored Bob's concern, coming to stand just a few feet away from the window.
Inside, he heard his sister shushing. Each second felt like agony, and seeing a small opening in the curtain that hung inside the window, Max peered through it.
There, his sister Stacy stood, holding an infant against her chest as she bounced it up and down.
"It's okay little one… Mommy is here."
Cries came, and she moved out of sight, the sound of a chair creaking and soon the noise of a child sucking sustenance from its mother's teat.
She's… a mother… how…
His knuckle popped as the answer came, and Max trembled outside.
Caleb… I'm going to—

No… you won’t. That isn’t you, and we both know it. Breathe, and return to your friends. You are on the cusp of losing control, and I can feel it. All this emotion and things you are seeing and remembering has made you raw. Do not mess up the plans you have because you give in.
He had to fight the urge not to laugh out loud, to fill the dimly lit area where he stood with a sound that would be so pure it would wake everyone.
This is bad… you’re holding me back from losing control… oh how the roles have reversed.
Yes, and now I see how much of a pain it must have been to deal with me.
Max leaped into the air, grabbed the spear that was waiting for him, and held on as Bob took him away, only allowing himself the opportunity to laugh as he streaked across the night sky.
***
Tanila massaged his head, letting him settle down as Max told her what he had seen.
“I can’t imagine what you’re going through, but soon it will get better.”
“How? She can’t chase her dream of being a warrior with a child,” he replied. “Part of me wants to rip Caleb’s head off… the other part of me wants to drag his ass here and make him man up and help with his child. Yet I know it’s probably better he’s not here!”
She nodded and ran her nails across the bald skin, giving a gentle kiss, and shrugged.
“That’s what I love about you Max Hoste,” Tanila whispered. “You understand family, and I know you will be a great father.”
Snorting, he looked up at her and smiled.
“Have I ever told you how much I love you?”
“Every day… not just in words but how you treat and care for me as well. I pray you know that I love you just as much.”
Sitting up, Max took her chin in his fingers and pressed his lips against hers.
His other hand was still on her stomach, the tiniest of bumps present.
“You know the child is growing but so slowly… It still amazes me how long it takes for an elven child to be born.”
“We shall see,” Tanila replied. “From what you have said, they are growing faster than usual, and if what I… believe, and this child is what many will fear, it may come sooner than some expect.”
Max nodded and then rubbed a thumb slowly around her navel, smiling as she twitched slightly from the touch.
“Either way, our child will have both of us to raise them and know they are loved. This, I promise.”

14 Chapter 343 - Setting a Trap

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2039923/chapter-343-setting-a-trap;[2025-01-31 15:04]

//Published: 2025-01-31 15:02

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/104556/recursed]

Chapter 343 - Setting a Trap
“Gods Max, you and the stuff you always show… a dragon egg?”

Nodding, he let each of them touch it, their eyes wide and hands trembling as the hard outer silver shell almost seemed to vibrate as each of them drew near to it.
“It’s going to hatch soon, isn’t it?” Batrire asked.
“Yes, and I’m still not sure where to take it. It will need someone or another dragon to watch over it and help protect it.”
“Uh… quick question,” Cordellia asked as she looked around the egg that was approaching the size of Fowl. “You’re not planning on keeping it as a pet, are you?”
Chuckling he shook his head.
“It’s hard enough caring for a dwarf warrior, I can’t imagine the problems we would face trying to keep others from killing a baby dragon. There is no telling how much it will eat and what will be required for it to learn. All things I’m not sure of. Now then, if you don’t mind, I need to put it in storage again. It slows down the hatching, but soon I won’t be able to stop it. The chest that Igarra had it in was different. I only wish I could have kept it, but there was no way to store it. All this different kind of dimensional magic is so weird.”
Fowl’s thick fingers traced the egg, his eyes never leaving the silver treasure.
“Still… a dragon… a baby dragon. You have no idea what this would mean to a dwarf.”
“Free ale for life?”
Snorting, their warrior nodded.
“The king would pay everything you asked for such a pet… yet… now I know it’s not a pet.”
“When did you go and get smart?” Batrire teased as she winked at her man.
“Bah, woman, stop that. You know I put a single point in intelligence!”
Everyone laughed, and Max turned to study Tanila, who was still shaking her head slightly, one hand on her stomach the other on the dragon egg.
“You okay?”
She nodded and smiled.
“So much life lately. It feels weird after having been doing nothing but killing in the tower nonstop and now… I guess it’s just the motherly side of me I never imagined.”
“You’ll be a fine mother,” Batrire said, moving to hug her friend. “Hopefully, this child has hair, though.”
Everyone laughed as Max lifted the egg, trying to ignore how it shook every time he touched it.
“Soon, you can be free. For now, rest, little one. I’ll find you a home.”
Having stored the egg, he swapped it out for a sheet of paper and placed it on the table they had been gathered around.
“Okay, now down to business. You’re good to go if you want to explore the town today. Go in sets of two, and you should be fine. No going off alone.”
Everyone nodded, and Max then tapped the buildings he had sketched out on the paper.
“We’re going to set up here for the show. I’ve secured a spot with our gracious host for a small fee. I told him one of my companions was excited to see a Choosing Day for humans, and he was more than happy to make it work. I’m not certain what may or may not happen, but we won’t act unless we need to.”
“By need to, you mean someone is declared unskilled?” Fowl asked.
“Correct. I won’t let them ruin another person’s life. My real hope is that no one suffers that fate. Still, I want to talk with those who come today. There are a few questions I need to ask.”
Tanila made a tsking sound but said nothing when they looked at her.
“We’re vastly more powerful than anyone in town, so if something does happen, please don’t get flagged, but also don’t worry about it if you do. No one is going to harm you. Trust me.”
“Trust me, he says,” Batrire snorted. “Like I’m pretty sure not many in the three kingdoms could give you any trouble.”
Shaking his head, Max frowned.

“I wouldn’t bet on that. I’m confident some out there can. The problem is not knowing who until that moment comes. For now, this is just to ensure my sister has no problems. After that moment, then things will go sideways.”
Fowl coughed and scratched his beard.
“You’re certain you want to cause problems?”
“I want answers. The problems only come if they don’t answer. You don’t have to be a part of this if you aren’t comfortable with it.”
Shaking his head, their warrior frowned.
“I wouldn’t dream of not supporting or helping you in this cause. I believe it’s the right one, but it’s a road we can’t return from. Still, had this been something my people dealt with, I know for a fact you’d help Batrire and me.”
“I’m with Shorty,” Cordellia said with a grin.
Sighing, Max nodded and then took the paper and stored it.
“Well then, with that settled, I have one last thing to do today, and after that I’ll be done.”
Four bags of coins appeared in his hand, and he tossed one to each of his party members, who all grinned as they opened them up.
“Why are you giving me a bag of gold?” Fowl asked. “Not that I’m complaining.”
“Profits from our regents back in Rumstant. I forgot to give, and since you might end up wanting to shop today, I made certain to remember and give them.”
“But I didn’t have any part of that,” Cordellia said. “Why give me some?”
“You’re family, and that’s what family does. Besides, you have a large amount ready to draw upon, Everett said. All of you actually do.”
“Like, how much is a large amount?” Batrire asked, her teeth showing between her beard as she smiled.
“A little under five thousand each.”
Coughs and sputtering came from both dwarves and their archer as they tried to comprehend such a vast amount just casually tossed out.
“Five thousand! I have five thousand gold?!” Fowl exclaimed.
“A little under, but yes,” Max replied with a wink. “Don’t go spending it yet, though! You got a wedding to prepare for, and from what I’ve been told, it ain’t cheap, and as the groom, you’re expected to pay for most of it.”
One moment, Fowl was smiling like he had won a jackpot; the next, his face went white as he turned to see Batrire rubbing her hands together.
“I’m going to have one of the greatest weddings our kingdom has ever seen!” she cackled.
“Dear Ockrim, please kill me,” their warrior cried out.
***
“I must say we don’t get many requests for a private room, but based on your ranking and desire to keep your presence a secret, we shall make this exception for you.”
Max nodded. As the guild attendant left, shutting the door behind him, Max stared at the shard, which was smaller than all the others he had seen.
It barely resonates with power. This one feels like a dim connection to the system.
Are you sure you want to attempt this? Aren’t you worried about the problems this might cause?
The plan that you want requires a few things. I’m willing to take the risk, and I doubt anyone besides those who may act in time will notice at first. As long as I don’t spend too much time we should be fine.
Max moved to the skill shard surrounded by a metal frame without waiting any longer. The piece of crystal was barely bigger than both of his hands and had enough protection wrapped around it to ensure someone didn’t just *walk* off with it.
Gone was the fear that had once overwhelmed him.
I’m ready.
Then touch it and let me see what we can do.

Both hands touched the cool surface, and a moment later it turned warm as lines of notifications began to scroll by.
***
[Connection Rejected - Entity does not meet -]
[Connection Override]
[Max Hoste]
[19….]
[Connection Terminated]
[KHLF4 U5ER]
[Backdoor Connection Acquired]
[System Access Granted]
[System Access Noticed]
[Attempting to Evade]
[Prepare for Integration Transport]
Pain erupted in Max's mind, and his eyes felt like they were going to melt from a bright light that raced toward him.
****
We need to move. Quickly.
Blinking, the pain that had been there was gone, and Max's mind felt crushed by what he was witnessing.
Every color imaginable and then some streaked by him, all twisted and intertwined together. Different strands raced off in other directions, a vast web of colored lines.
Where?... what?...
We are inside the system. This is what I see when I am here.
Only then did Max realize they were moving, and he wasn't in control of whatever body they were in.
How come I cannot control anything?
This isn't your domain. It is mine.
Bob's reply felt weird, but as they raced along a strand of lights that stretched like a road, pulsating with power, they turned sharply, and something streaked by, barely missing them.
His skill raced to the edge of the strand they were on and then leapt into darkness, suddenly streaking across an empty void until Max realized they were hurtling toward another strand of light further away.
What was that?
A part of the system is designed to lock on to us and track us so they can determine who we are and why we are here. Now be quiet for a moment. I need to see what I'm looking for.
As they landed on the street, a whole world began to appear: blocky buildings, each with letters and numbers that started to reveal themselves to Max's new skill.
Planet 4-92819-069 List
System Skill Sets
Rules for Skill Sets
Entity List
Bob streaked past them, and unable to turn and look more, Max began to understand a portion of what his skill had discussed before.
Up there, do you see that?
A muscular, glowing black hand and arm appeared in their vision, pointing to a building that shined brighter than the others. It was surrounded by many lines of energy that pulsed in every direction.
What is it?
Where we need to be in order to access something. Now we don't have much time. Hold on.
Max wanted to ask Bob what he meant, but one moment, the buildings next to him streaked by so fast that they seemed to blur into a solid line. Even though he didn't think this body was real, a sensation of nausea came over him, and Max found that

they were flying toward a set of windows, large red bars pulsating with power over them.
How can we fit—
Watch.
[System Manipulation - Phase]
The wall near the bars turned translucent, and their approach pattern adjusted. They moved through the wall into a room lined with a dozen large crystals, each similar to the one their Faction had.
All of them were connected through thick strands of light that flowed into the floor and then vanished.
This one. Now then, let me see if we can do what I want.
Bob moved to the one his attention had been focused on, dodging certain parts of the floor, which seemed weird until Max recognized that traps were littered around them.
Two black hands reached forward and touched the crystal, causing it to change color from the clear one it had been a moment ago to black like the hands that held it.
A high-pitched noise appeared in his head, unlike anything he had ever heard before, and a steady stream of information tried to overwhelm him.
It's too much! I can't—
Quiet! I need to focus!
Something was happening, and whatever it was, he could sense that Bob was doing it. The stream of data that flew by was immense, and it came in thousands of different languages. He could catch just a glimpse of some, and he was almost able to read and understand them. Others were beyond whatever skill he had, still a mystery.
Then, a section of data appeared, and the language was nothing like Max had ever imagined. Each one was like a twenty-sided object, with different runes, symbols, images, and lines denoting things.
Whatever language Bob was using, he navigated through it with a precision that made Max marvel at how his skill enabled him to do whatever he was doing.
Then the spheres shifted and changed, moving around until everything began to pull back and his vision returned to normal.
A wave of exhaustion hit, and Bob almost stumbled.
Are you okay?!
Yes… that was… harder than I thought. We need to go. They are coming for us.
Who? Who is coming?
One of the five.
***
The throbbing pain in his temple was still there, and Max found himself leaning against the stone shard. His body ached as if he had been beaten by a stick for hours on end.
What?... What happened? I can't remember...
That last part was too painful. I couldn't dodge the attack, and so… I need to rest. Do not worry. When Choosing Day comes, a trap has been set. I… I should be fine by then .
Bob! What did you do?
Laughter came inside him, making the throbbing pain slightly worse.
You'll see… watch the color of the gem…
Max started to call out, asking more but he sensed that Bob had disappeared. Like when Tanila was really asleep, he could sense the change in her breathing, his skill was doing the same.
"God damn you Bob…"
Turning, Max moved to the door.

15 Chapter 344 - Max Hoste Lives! https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2042024/chapter-344-max-hoste-lives;[2025-02-03 10:31]

//Published: 2025-02-01 15:02 [2025-01-31 15:10]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/104210/the-crime-lord-bard]

Chapter 344 - Max Hoste Lives!

“Every day I wonder how you’re going to shatter my reality,” Tanila stated. “You’re telling me that Bob somehow took you and him somewhere else?”

Max shrugged, the pain in his head finally gone after a few hours.

“I don’t know how to explain it other than that it was real. Like when I was trapped on the other world all those months, I know that I could have lived there until I grew old. Every creature, being, monster, whatever was real. Watching Bob move at the place we were… It was real and yet… connected to something so much bigger. Like…”

He paused, and after a few seconds a small pouch appeared, and Max opened it up, dumping out a pile of sand.

“Each of these grains of sand seems so insignificant, but together, they fill up this bag. Get enough of them and…”

Using his Sand Mastery skill, he formed a sand sculpture of Tanila that started to walk across the wood table. Each step made the robe it wore swish, and the braid he had mimicked bounced with motion.

“Get enough of them, and you can create something beautiful.”

“Now you’re just showing off,” she replied, never taking her eyes off the thing he had created.

Holding the pouch close, the sand figurine jumped into it, vanishing from sight a few seconds before he stored it all.

“What I really want to know is what Bob did. He said he laid a trap, and a part of me is even more upset that he is now resting.”

A gentle tap on their bedroom door came.

“Come in,” Max called out.

Cordellia popped her head in.

“I picked up some food and snacks. Figured you might like some fresh baked items.”

His stomach made a growling sound, and unable to help himself, Max grinned.

“Curse you and knowing me too well.”

***

“Oh… the look on his face! It’s priceless,” Fowl howled. “Damn you, Cordellia, you were right.”

Ignoring the laughter of the four, Max ate the last of the muffins that had been purchased from the shop Nancy worked at.

Each bite brought back memories, and even though they had meant to poke fun at him and the woman he had once considered marrying, comfort came from something he had never forgotten.

“I had expected you to moan after each bite,” Tanila said with a wink. “From how you described them a while back, I was certain nothing could match their flavor.”

Swallowing the large piece in his mouth, Max grinned.

“Well, let’s just say I’ve learned that there are many great shops to get baked goods from. Still, I’ll make sure to find a way to get back at you all for doing this.”

“Make sure it’s worth it,” Fowl said. “It took us some hunting to find the place, but in the end, it was worth it.”

He dabbed the few crumbs on the table with his finger and then deposited them in his mouth. Max just smiled.
Sometimes, home was exactly what you needed it to be.
***
“I hope these seats are what you were hoping for,” Mr. Sandahl shouted as the crowd roared after a young woman got the archer class. “Today seems to be off to a very interesting start!”
Giving a simple nod, Max did his best to smile, wondering what Bob had done, as over a third of the skills gained today had been from a fighting class.
“Correct me if I’m wrong, but usually, one doesn’t see this quantity of combat-related skills being given. Or is this town just that unusual?”
“Oh, no, sir! I’ve never seen anything like this in all my life. It’s quite exciting, as you can tell by the reaction of everyone gathered.”
Tanila squeezed his hand, turning his attention back to the steps where another teen stood, ready for their turn. The older man in the red robe’s expression was easy to read.
He is wondering what is going on.
Yes… yes he is. I don’t remember that many wrinkles being present in your memory. Perhaps he has aged more than usual this last year.
Chuckling to himself, Max could only imagine the effect his skill and escaping might have caused the leader of the five workers for the adventurers guild.
A forced smile was there, cheeks too high, gritted teeth, and narrowed eyes. Already twice, the older man had motioned for one of his fellow red-robe-wearing helpers to come forward as he whispered something to them.
She’s not there. I wonder if that woman is still alive.
It would be a shame if she died for striking you.
“[Mage]!”
The crowd went crazy as the teen boy’s face regained a little color. The shock of his skill was obviously not one he had anticipated at all.
Glancing down the road to where at least another hundred were waiting in line, Max still hadn’t seen his sister, wondering where she was.
“Surely she would come,” Tanila said in his ear. “They have to. Right?”
He shrugged, not having ever paid attention to anything like this before. There had been a few young girls who got pregnant before Choosing Day, but he hadn’t paid attention to if they had come or not.
With anticipation, his eyes stayed focused on the road and who was coming, hoping and waiting to see.
***
“There she is,” Max said with a sigh of relief.
At the end of the line were his sister and a few others. Each of them was wearing clothes that didn’t match the rest, not as fine or as glamorous as the ones before them.
Stacy’s body had changed somewhat in a year. There was still muscle, but she wasn’t like she had always been. Her shoulders were rolled forward slightly, and her eyes were fixed on the ground rather than the place she had always talked about. The blue dress looked to be an older one, most likely altered by his mother or another woman. Even her hair wasn’t as well done as he remembered.
Let go of the rage. Keep a steady mind. The time is coming.
Bob… I swear she better not be hurt.
Trust me, Max. We are one, and I do not want your family to get hurt. No. She will be fine. Just be ready to move.
“Our friend says when she goes, we must be ready to act.”
Tanila and Cordellia both nodded, each informing the dwarf next to them of it.
As each person before the last group acquired their skill, the number of people who stuck around to cheer began to lessen.

“If you want, we can join the rest of the city and go celebrate somewhere else,” Sandahl said. “We are nearing the end, and often these are the skills which are usually simple common trades.”
Shaking his head, Max frowned.
“I came here for the whole experience. We will see it through to the end.”
“Ahh, forgive me then. Well in that case—”
Reaching out and grabbing the owner of the Evening’s Respite, Max stopped the portly man.
“You weren’t planning on leaving, were you?”
Those brown eyes trembled slightly, and then he shook his head.
“Of… Of course not! Simply going to get a better view from over here!”
Letting go, Max turned back to the stage, watching as the next one came forward and touched the crystal.
It flickered a few colors before landing on a simple yellow color that appeared. The older man and the young girl conversed for a few seconds.
“[Baker] !”
A groan came from Cordellia.
Ignoring his elven friend, Max counted down the number of teens before his sister.
Twenty-seven…
***
His palms were sweating, and his heart raced as Stacy took the steps one at a time. Twenty yards away, his parents had materialized, and their haggard appearance left no doubt how bad things must be. His father hadn’t shaved, his hair was a mess, and his mother’s dress had more wrinkles than he could believe were possible in a simple outfit.
She never went out in public with wrinkles!
He watched as his sister seemed scared, and the group of five in robes all seemed ready for whatever might come next.
“Touch the crystal.”
Even unable to hear, Max could read the lips, having heard those words from the older man and watching him say the same thing all day long.
Nodding, his sister stepped forward, arms trembling as she moved close to the shard. Her hands touched it, and the crystal began to change color until it turned back to a clear state.
Max watched his sister’s eyes widen and the scowl that appeared on the older man’s face.
A cry of pain and agony came from where his parents stood, and inside his head, laughter began to appear.
“UNSKILLED!”
“LIES!” Max shouted, jumping from where he had been sitting and landing just a few feet from the stairs, having cleared twenty yards like it was nothing.
The four male attendants in robes had started to move forward, and the older one’s scowl disappeared as his eyes turned from Stacy to Max.
“Who are you?! This girl is—”
“She is not, and you know it!” Max bellowed. “Stacy Hoste, check your status and tell us what skill you have!”
“Who do you—”
Before the man could finish, he was next to the older man, a dagger placed just an inch from his throat.
“Lie again, and I will kill you. Trust me,” Max explained, watching as the four men prepared to come forward.
“Do you have any idea who I am?! I am Terrance Gramdur! Third highest—”
“And I’m Max Hoste,” Max declared, storing the item that hid his appearance.
Both of the older man’s eyes went so wide his whole fist could have almost fit in their socket as the skin on his bald head formed mountains of wrinkled flesh.
“Stacy, what does your status say?”
“Max… is it really you?”

Nodding, he smiled.
The four attendants charged him, and Max lifted Terrance by the front of his robes with one hand while holding him behind him.
One with a sword came first, swinging at Max who stood there, not dodging.
The blade connected with his head, shattering upon impact.
As the first attacker stumbled past him, the second, who wielded a club struck it against his side, dropping the weapon as the impact and vibrations worked their way up it.
Smiling, Max turned to the other two, now both holding a sword.
“It won’t work, and if you don’t back off, I will end your life.”
His Sonar felt the older man he held in his hand motion to Stacy, and Max shook his head in frustration as the closest one charged her.
The attacker took two steps before face-planting into an invisible air wall, staggering backward.
[Stone Mastery]
The very blocks of stone they were standing on changed, and soon, all four found their feet fastened up past their ankles by the bricks that had been solid just a moment ago. More rose up, binding their hands as well.
“How!? Your skill!” Terrance hissed.
“Yes,” Max replied, glaring at the man he held like a rag doll.
Turning slowly, he gazed upon the crowd, seeing his parents and everyone else in town who was still there, staring at him.
Each person was frozen, most not making a sound as they tried to comprehend what they were witnessing. A boy who had been labeled unskilled, believed to be dead, stood there, absorbing strikes from weapons without injury. The men they all feared were unable to fight back or move.
“They have lied to you!” Max shouted. “For years, they have said some people like me were unskilled, but that was not true! They have culled those like myself, too weak to fight back. I am the Seth Pendal you have heard about. I am the champion of the arena. I am the one who has beaten the 50th floor in the tower. And I have come home for justice!”
Max felt the weight in his arms go limp, and even though he didn’t need to look to see what had happened, he turned, laughing as Terrance fainted.
Grinning, Max turned to his sister.
“It’s okay, sis. I’m here. Now tell me what skill you got.”
“You mean… the skills I got?” she asked, her voice trembling as she stared off to the side.
Laughter like no other came from inside.
Oh, my friend, you will enjoy this.

16 Chapter 345 - A Display of Power https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2043551/chapter-345-a-display-of-power;[2025-02-03 10:31]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/103628/kukulkans-successor-a-litrpg-apocalypse-with-all]

Chapter 345 - A Display of Power

“Skills? How many skills?” Max asked, realizing now that the entire crowd as well as the four attendants, had gone silent.
“Three…”

Murmurs came from everyone and unable to help himself, Max joined in with Bob, laughing as he shook his head.
Stone began to form around where he stood, and Max held Terrance out until it encased the older man's body, only his torso and neck not surrounded by a prison.
Moving quickly, Max went to his sister and helped her stand, brushing a few wayward strands of hair from her face before smiling as he pulled her close.
"I've missed you. I'm so sorry I couldn't come back till now!"
She squeezed him, and then Max felt the presence of two others coming, one at a full sprint, the other a staggered state.
Turning and holding an arm out, he caught his mother as she crashed into them, tears flowing but a smile that looked brighter than the sun on the haggard woman's complexion.
"My boy! My boy is alive! Alive!"
Kisses rained down upon his cheeks as she squeezed him, laughing and sobbing.
"Dad," Max said as he looked at his father, who was standing a few steps away, unsure of what was going on before him.
"Is… is this a dream? A nightmare? Are you real, son?"
"Don't worry, Dad. I'm home."
Like a dam that had broken, those eyes of his father burst with liquid, and he raced to where his son was standing, joining the trio as they laughed and cried.
A few moments had passed before a voice came from out in the crowd.
"What skills?!"
Sniffing, they all turned to see one of the teens still waiting their turn looking at them.
A young boy, obviously from a poorer family as his clothes had patches on even his best outfit.
Glancing at his sister, Max smiled.
"The floor is yours, sis. Tell the people what the gods have given you."
Rubbing the tears that had flowed so freely, she nodded and took a deep breath.
"I've only heard of one, but the other two are things I don't recognize."
"It's okay, just start with the one you know first," he replied.
"Weapon mastery," she said with a grin.
"HOLY ELF TITS!"
Fowl's outburst made everyone turn to see the dwarf who stood there in plate armor, minus his helm, shaking his head.
"Fowl Hammerfall!" Batrire exclaimed.
"What?! Ockrim help me, he loves this family too much!"
Applause came from many as they tried to still comprehend what they were witnessing.
"And it's an uncommon rank!" Stacy exclaimed.
Their dwarven warrior groaned again but remained silent as more people applauded.
"What's the next one sis?"
"Holy Crusader."
"GIANT OGRE BALLS!"
Once more Fowl's outburst made everyone look at him as the dwarf edged closer to Max and his sister, hands shaking in the air as if pleading to someone.
"I'm not familiar with it," Max said. "Fowl?"
"It's a clear skill! A clear skill! A rare one at that!"
"So it's good?" Stacy asked.
A ten-second-long groan came from the dwarf, who nodded the entire time.
"You could get a place in the dwarf king's guard with that skill, human or not."
For a moment, light returned to his sister's eyes. They sparkled and then vanished.
"I… I can't. I have a baby," she whispered. She looked down in shame.
Max took his finger and lifted his sister's chin.
"I know, and you're fine. Trust me, we can work it out, and you can still be the adventurer you want to be. Now then. What's the last one?"
Taking a deep breath, she glanced at the dwarven warrior now biting his finger.

“Uh… it’s Juggernaut.”
Max sensed it but didn’t stop it when Fowl passed out, crumpling to the ground.
“Dear gods… she’s broken,” Batrire said. “Just like her brother.”
Laughing, he grabbed his sister in his one free arm and pulled her close for a second before holding up an arm and turning to the crowd that was beginning to grow.
“People of Alundra! May I present to you one of the greatest warriors who shall ever come from our town! Stacy Hoste!”
The loudest cheers came from the group of teens still waiting their turn to find out their skills. Soon the rest of the crowd joined in, and then a few moments later, Max moved his family from the steps.
“You all go ahead. Find out your skill and share it if you want, but otherwise, keep it to yourself.”
“Can we do that?” the boy who had spoken up first asked, motioning to Terrance who was now awake and glaring at them.
“He’s not going to hurt you. Trust me. Besides, I have a gift for each of you after you get your skill.”
A gold coin appeared in his finger, and Max tossed it to the teen.
“You’re up first.”
The young man had barely caught it. The surprise of the coin and gesture took a second to set in as he stared at more wealth than the teen could probably imagine.
“You… you’re serious?”
“I am. Now hurry up. The guards will be here soon, and I don’t want to have problems when they come.”
Like a flood, the dozen teens still waiting surged forward, each collecting a gold coin before touching the shard and gaining their skills.
“Stop that!” Terrance shouted. “You can’t do this!”
Max gently freed himself from his mother’s grasp and handed her to his father before he strode to where the red-faced attendant was.
“Oh, I can and I will, and we’re going to have a long talk. Now, unless you want me to stick a ball of stone in your mouth, I suggest you shut it.”
Terrance opened his mouth to speak, and as he did, stone began to rise from the ground.
Clamping his jaw so hard it clicked, the older man glared, still seemingly unconcerned with the monster he didn’t truly recognize before him.
Max could see in the distance a group of about twenty guards coming, one on a horse he remembered from the days he had been forced to train as a teen in case he wanted to be a warrior.
“Max,” Cordellia said, holding her bow in one hand.
“It’s fine. They won’t attack, and if they do, it won’t go well.”
He turned to everyone who was standing, wondering what might take place next.
“You all need to go home. Know this, my family is off limits.”
As he spoke, his tone changed, and the threat was conveyed not only by his expression but also by the narrowing of his eyes as he looked at everyone still standing.
“Make sure the entire town knows this because if someone hurts them, I will hunt down them and everyone they love and do far worse than what happens to my family. Any questions?”
Most shook their heads and took a step back, now looking for a way to escape the gaze of someone who singlehandedly destroyed five men in a moment.
“Good, now go!”
Everyone took off, moving at a pace to get away but while not trampling each other.
“Thank you again!”
Max nodded at the teen who had gone first after his sister.
“Mom, Dad. I need you to stand behind me. I’ll take care of everything else. Just stay back here. Okay?”
“Are you certain, son?”
Laughing at his father’s question, Max smiled.

“Trust me, they don’t want to fight, and they already know it.”
As if Max’s words were true, the group of guards slowed down, and most of the men and women had pained expressions at the sight before them.
“Max Hoste… is that really you?”
Stepping forward, Max held up both hands and nodded.
“It is. Captain Molo?”
“You have a good memory, son, but tell me… how are you alive, and why are these men like this?”
Motioning with his head behind him, Max held up three fingers.
“They lied to our town about myself and others being unskilled. They attacked me today when I tried to reveal that truth. Finally, they attacked my sister.”
Frowning, the older white-haired man nodded and slid off the chestnut stallion he was sitting on.
“The fact you’re alive and have done such a thing proves there is an element of truth. Still, they are protected by the queens and the adventurers guild. How can you hope to stand against them?”
“Don’t worry about the queens. They and I have talked, and neither of them are going to interfere the moment they learn I was involved.”
“The queens? You’ve spoken with the queens? When? Why? I mean… you were supposed to be a [Baker]. How in the gods are you… like this?”
“I had a skill on my Choosing Day, and they lied about it. What they were going to do to me, I’m not certain, but I’m about to find out. Since then I have been running, trying to get stronger so that I could protect myself and my family.”
Max turned slightly and pointed to the four adventurers standing near the stone steps and grinned.
“They became my family, and together, we conquered dungeons, cleared dungeon breaks around the capital, and passed the 50th floor of the tower.”
Behind Captain Molo, the guards were glancing at each other, asking questions and some backing up.
“That… is quite a… tale. Not that I want to say I don’t believe it,” the older man replied, “but it’s only been a year. How? Lifetimes are spent trying to achieve such a thing.”
“I know… it’s hard to explain, and I can’t tell you everything, just know it’s true. All this was done under the name Seth Pendal.”
Those blue eyes of the captain blinked a dozen times in a few seconds, and his mouth fell open.
“Seth… Pendal. You claim to be him?”
Pulling his adventurer token from his storage, Max handed it to the captain, who stared at it and turned it over and over a few times.
“I… mean there is no way you could have this and be the rank you are unless it’s true… Still, I…”
He stopped himself and set his face, breathing heavily once, and glared at the men in the red robes behind Max and the others.
“We shall leave this matter in your hands then. I hope others will learn to not prey on the weak. And for what it’s worth, I’m glad you’re safe.”
Captain Molo handed back the token and then waited for Max to shake his hand.
“Take care of your family, son. They’ve missed you greatly.”
“I will, sir. And if you don’t mind. Make sure everyone in town knows that if they mess with my family, they will find me knocking on their door, and that’s not a visit anyone wants.”
An unexpected laugh came from the leader of the guards, who shook his head and smiled.
“Judging from how you handled those men, I’m certain no one in town will be foolish enough to make that mistake. Anything else I can help you with?”
Sighing, Max motioned at the street.

“Not right now but later. I seem to have put a damper on the day, and for that I will try to make it up to the city. Let the mayor know I’ll come by before I leave and offer some ideas on how to help.”
“You didn’t ruin this day,” Molo replied. “In fact, judging from the expressions I saw on the last teens and the color of the coin I saw in a few of their hands, you probably made this the greatest Choosing Day our city has seen in a long time.”
Nodding, Max motioned to his family behind him.
“If you don’t mind, I need to take care of them and then clean up this mess. I promise not to spill blood in this city unless someone is foolish enough to attack us.”
“That’s more than I could hope for. Carry on, Max. And welcome home again.”
Smiling, Max turned as the captain whistled and then moved to his horse, climbing back into the saddle.
He could see the smile on his sister’s face, and it was like a dream he thought would never come true.
Behind his family were five men all struggling against the bonds he had placed them in.
It looks like we’ll have to take this party elsewhere. I… thank you for whatever you gave my sister.
Laughter filled his head.
I only made it possible. The system chose the skills. How she ended up with three and those… someone else had a hand in it.
Who could… Ockrim and Phaius?
Perhaps. Worry about that another time. For now enjoy your family. There is much we still must do with those five.

17 Chapter 346 - Hope Offered

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2045302/chapter-346-hope-offered;[2025-02-04 11:29]

//published: 2025-02-03 15:02 [2025-01-31 15:10]

“You want us to do what?” Stacy asked. “Touch you?”
Nodding, Max focused on the group of men he had stacked on top of each other, each of them face down, chest to back, hands and feet still immobilized by their stone bindings.
“I’m going to straddle them, and then I just need everyone to touch me somewhere. This should work.”
“Dear Ockrim, I’m too pretty to die,” Fowl muttered as he watched Max climb on top of the older man’s back and stretch his legs as far as possible to touch them all.
“Okay, now you all touch me. Sooner we do this, the sooner we can get home and enjoy some time away from all the prying eyes.”
Everyone moved quickly, anxious not to have to worry about the townspeople, who were gathered around corners or peeking out of windows at what Max had been doing the last ten minutes.
Once he was certain everyone was touching him, he gave a small prayer that everything would work like Bob had promised.
[Planetary Travel - Waypoints]
A purple portal washed over all of them, stretching to fit everyone, and one moment they were in the center of town at the stone steps, the next they were about twenty yards from the house in a section of the overgrown yard.
“What?… We… How?” his mother started to say before turning and heaving.
Laughing, Max swung his leg over and climbed off Terrance, grinning as the rest all looked a bit pale.
“It should pass.”

No sooner had he spoken those words, than both his sister and father began to vomit, followed by the men stacked on top of each other.
“You should do something about that,” Tanila stated as she pointed at the mess of men.
The stones began to move, and soon each of the attendants were seated with their hands and feet in front of them.
“Let us go! We didn’t do anything but obey orders!”
Max turned to the one who had called out, seeing the rest of his companions nodding in agreement.
“Tell you what. I’ve got a skill that detects if you’re lying. Answer what I ask truthfully, and I won’t kill you. Lie, and I’ll make you beg for death, because I’ve learned to make men suffer for a very long time.”
Unsure whether the attendant was grimacing from the vomit that covered his robes and face or those words, Max leaned in close, putting his fingers on the man’s wrist. Like some racing animal, the heart inside his captive was racing.
“Has anyone ever been unskilled when you traveled through the towns for Choosing Day?”
“Do not answer that question!” Terrance shouted.
A wave of pressure came, and Max turned, sensing it as he stared at the older man, his eyes looking ready to hurl daggers at him.
He could feel the attendant’s body tighten, and looking back saw his mouth wasn’t working no matter how hard it appeared he wanted to.
“What did you do?”
“They don’t answer to you,” Terrance growled.
A cry came from inside the house, and a young teen girl came out, letting out a shriek at seeing the collection of men, women, and other races present.
Stacy didn’t wait, moving quickly to where the girl was, holding the baby tight and shaking like a leaf in a windstorm.
“I got her. You can go. Thank you, Nickie!”
“What… who are these people? Why are—”
“Don’t worry about it,” Max’s mom said as she moved to where the girl was. “Everything is okay now. Max is home.”
Nickie’s mouth fell open, and she turned, looking at Mrs. Hoste and then at Max, who waved at her.
“You’re talking! And he’s supposed to be dead! How?”
“It’s a long story,” Stacy replied. “Now, I’ll pay you later if–”
“No need,” Tanila declared as she moved forward, handing a gold coin to the young girl. “If you’re smart, you’ll forget what you saw and wait till you’re needed again.”
Opening and closing her mouth a few times the young girl gaped at both the coin and the elven woman.
“Yes! Thank you!”
Glancing around once more, Nickie turned and ran off back toward town.
Max’s mom turned and looked at her house, and he saw her frown.
“It’s okay, Mom. We got somewhere else to stay instead.”
Fowl nodded and moved to a section a bit away from the house and pulled out a tent that was about ten feet by ten feet.
“How can everyone fit in there?”
“It’s magic,” the dwarf answered. “Now come on inside. We’ve got food and drink waiting!”
Max motioned to his mother and sister, who followed the others, leaving just him and his dad with the men that had been captured.
“You okay, Dad?”
His father scratched at the scruff on his face and frowned.
“I… I thought you were dead, and your mother… she… she didn’t handle it well. And then your sister got pregnant, and with what had been said about you…”
His dad trailed off, motioning to the property.

“It’s been hard, and if I’m honest, I’m not sure we could have lasted much longer. I’ve sold everything. How? What happened? How are you so strong?”
Taking a deep breath, Max rubbed his bald head.
“Let me deal with these men, and then I’ll tell you, Mom, and Stacy later. Okay?”
“What are you going to do to them?”
He could see the concern in his father’s eyes but also the way his dad was shaking.
“Let me handle this. Just know, things will be better. I promise.”
Max watched as his dad nodded and turned to head toward the tent that everyone had disappeared into. After two steps he turned and moved quickly to his son, embracing him and sobbing a few times.
There in the yard he had grown up on, remembering having been hurt before, having been the one to cry, and having been held by his dad, Max returned the hug and said the same thing he had heard many times.
“It’s alright. Tomorrow brings a new day and a new chance at life.”
Laughter and sniffing came as his dad lifted up his head and grinned.
“Touché.”
“I’ve waited my whole life for that one,” Max replied. “Now go inside. I’ll be there in a few.”
As his father walked away the man moved to where Terrance was and spit on him.
“Whatever happens, just know it won’t be enough to make you suffer as we did.”
Laughing, Max shook his head.
“Don’t worry, Dad, it will be.”
***
Walls rose up as stone from underneath the ground came when he beckoned it.
I could totally own the rock quarry market with this ability.
Yes… nothing better than using something so powerful to earn some gold.
Laughing, he didn’t care, and the looks the men were giving him as walls began to form and a building was created from a single piece of stone caused many of them to cry out.
Holding two lightstones, Max tossed them inside.
“I’m going to go enjoy something I should have never been forced to miss out on. You four right now are not in as much trouble as Terrance is. Stay quiet, relax, and later when I come to do what I must, perhaps you can make it out of here alive and still sane.”
“You don’t know who you’re messing with!”
Laughing, Max shook his head and stared down at the old man.
“No… none of you realize who you’ve messed with,” he replied before sealing up the building except for a few air holes.
***
Laughter came as everyone spent time talking and eating.
It pained Max to see his parents trying not to stuff their faces, but Fowl was a great host, playing up the *try this* role over and over.
Tanila and he laughed as his sister’s daughter, Callie, laughed and cooed as they played with her.
“She’s Caleb’s, isn’t she?” Max asked when Tanila had taken the baby to where Batrire and Cordellia had sat.
A small nod came as his sister frowned.
“I… I thought he loved me, yet… now I know I was nothing more than something to conquer. If I ever see him again, I’m going to kick his ass!”
Max pulled her in and hugged her, unable to wipe away the smile that had been there since they entered the tent, even when she sobbed silently against him.
“I’ve missed you, sis. Thank you for saving me.”
“Thank you for saving me today,” she replied, blinking and staring at him. “How? How did I get these skills? Your dwarf friend seems to think there is no way this is possible!”
Shrugging, Max turned and watched Fowl, who was building a snack out of meat, cheese, and fresh bread.

“I have a friend who helped, but I wasn’t expecting all that. Just know the system gave you what it felt you deserved. You have the heart of a warrior, and I think it recognized that. You will have to be pretty strong to face what will happen next. The real question is, are you able to?”
“What’s coming next?”
Ruffling her messed-up hair, Max winked.
“Word will get out that you’re my sister and have three powerful skills. Many will try to recruit you, and there will be a lot of offers to *help* you. I have some friends who would be willing to take care of you. A faction that I’m part of and would do you right. I’m certain you could take Callie with you, and they will help care for her as you go adventuring.”
She scoffed and shook her head.
“You just got here and already want to ship me off?! What about Mom and Dad?”
“Look at them,” he replied. “They’re happy. Knowing I’m alive. Seeing you get three skills. They have their own battles, but at the end of the day, what matters is that we are all okay. Besides, Mom and Dad can join you if they want.”
Max turned to see both of his parents staring at him.
“We can what?” his mother asked.
“You two can join Stacy and her daughter in the capital. I have friends there who can provide for everything you would ever need. You could run a shop, make clothes, or you could retire. Dad could get land and run sheep out there or spend all his time spoiling his granddaughter. In the end, you only need to decide where and how you want to live.”
“You’re leaving us?!”
“It’s okay, dear. He’s alive.”
Max watched as his mom glared at her husband and then sighed, nodding and stroking the scruff on his dad’s face.
“That is true… for so long… I’m sorry… I… I lost all hope.”
He pulled her close, and everyone stood there silently as the pair hugged, both crying as they released the pain of how they had really felt.
A hand snaked around his arm, and Max smiled, squeezing it and looking at Stacy.
“You’re a bastard,” she whispered.
“Which makes you one as well, right?”
Laughing, she laid her head against his arm.
“Promise me if you see Caleb, you’ll punch him for me.”
“I would… but I’d probably kill him with one punch.”
A cry for food came, and since it wasn’t Fowl, Stacy sighed and moved to where Callie was starting to fuss.
“Sorry, but I must feed her, or she’ll be a pain. Is there somewhere I can do this in private?”
“Follow me,” Tanila said as she led her to another partitioned area in the tent.
“Son, can we talk?” his mom asked.
Max nodded as both his parents came to where he was.
“Are you safe? I mean… those men… what they represent. Everyone knows the power of the adventurers guild.”
Squeezing his mom’s shoulder, Max nodded.
“I’m fine. Trust me, I’m the one person they don’t want to upset. Besides, where I’m offering you four to go has a place none will venture to touch you. I’m serious. Ask any of my family over there. Not even the queens themselves would bother you.”
Both parents glanced at the three who remained, all having moved a little closer and nodding.
“You’ve raised a fine man,” Cordellia said. “There aren’t many humans I would trust with my life, but he is one of them. Even more, he has saved me countless times and helped me be a better person. The love he has for everyone had to come from you two.”
“Oh, don’t blame me,” Max’s dad replied. “That’s all his mother!”

Laughter came as a few tears trickled down the cheeks of the woman who raised Max.
“She’s right, Mom. I’m here today because of the man you helped me be.”

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

On a side note - one of my fellow mango authors and kick butt writers is launching their story on Amazon today!

Seras does an amazing job writing awesome stories as well as mentoring other authors and trying to help them succeed!

Ruinious Return hits hard!

Go ahead and check it out on amazon!

The price for saving the world is the right to rule it.
After saving a faraway world, Lyn Rivers was cast back to Earth. Wanting the admiration, prestige, and glory of saving that world, she forced her way back.
But she was forgotten, and someone else claimed credit for her deeds.
Now, with the power of a deity of destruction, she desires nothing more than to claim her place in history. To do that she will conquer dungeons, make alliances, destroy kingdoms, and build an empire.
After all, why ruin the world when you can bend it to your will?

https://www.royalroad.com/amazon/B0DS96Y6P6

18 Chapter 347 - The Darkness Within https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2047214/chapter-347-the-darkness-within;[2025-02-05 14:26]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Hey all!

Another author friend had a story drop today on Amazon!

Godslayers. It's a Sci-Fi Adventure so if you're a fan of that give it a read (or listen!)

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/amazon/B0DSCC19QS]

Chapter 347 - The Darkness Within

Max rubbed Tanila’s hand as they walked out of the tent.
“You’re a lucky man,” she said, shaking her head slightly. “Never in my life did I imagine a family could be how you all are right now. After everything you faced. How they were treated. It’s almost as if none of it ever happened, and yet I know it’s not true.”
“But you can see it on their faces. They are putting on a show, but deep down the pain is still there,” Max replied. “Even my sister, for all her bravery and smiles

tonight, cannot hide how she reacts when Callie cries. Whatever happens next will take time, but hopefully what I can provide will allow them to still pursue their dreams."
She stopped, holding his hand, and pulled Max back, keeping him from continuing toward the stone building he had created.
"You don't have to do this alone. Ever."
Studying Tanila's gaze, he nodded and smiled.
"And that means the world to me. Just know, the monster inside me… the rage that has been building up… the very thing Bob continues to warn me about."
Both of them chuckled at his last words, and Max shrugged.
"Whatever those people and the ones like them are doing, I need to find out. Something is happening to people like me and would have happened to my sister had I not been here. I can't let that go by without at least trying to stop them."
"But what if it's too much? I mean… whoever is doing this has the power to keep your queens in check. That kind of power…" Tanila sighed and frowned. "I've lived in a house like that… no, a cage. Never sure of what tomorrow might bring because the one who pulls the string doesn't share and always takes out those who might threaten the power they desire."
Squeezing her hand, Max lifted it up and kissed her soft skin.
"The problem is that eventually you and I both know someone must deal with this, and besides us, who is strong enough to face such a thing?"
She shrugged.
"Still… I can see the changes inside you. No matter how much you try to hide them."
Max took a deep breath and let it out slowly.
"What scares me the most is how much more I'm going to have to change. All the betrayal. All those who have tried to kill us. Even worse is knowing that everything we believe in is possibly wrong. If it wasn't for you, I'm certain I would have given in to Bob, and things would be completely different."
"And yet you're about to go in there and torture those men."
Frowning, all he could do was nod at her statement.
"Hopefully only the one, but yes. You don't have to join me. Part of me would rather you didn't."
She shook her head and motioned to her stomach.
"I won't let you go down that path. There is so much to live for, and not all of it should require us to become monsters."
"Us?"
"We both know that wherever this leads, more killing will be required. Only a fool believes that each life they take doesn't affect them. Perhaps that is why we are trained so early to see the monsters, dungeons, and tower as nothing more than cleansing the land and getting stronger. That way, when we must kill, we are used to watching the light of life go out of someone's eyes."
She is right. You have changed so much since what you experienced on that other world. Tread carefully the next steps, or it may not matter how evolved I have become. You still direct so much of our path.
Tsking his teeth, Max nodded, and a doorway appeared in the side of the stone building.
"I'll do what I can to limit it then. For now, let's focus on what is before us."
Tanila only grunted and let go of his hand, letting Max enter first, and the illumination of the lightstones inside spilled out of the doorway and onto the ground in the darkness of night.
Walking in he was assaulted by the smell of those who had been unable to hold their bowels any longer.
None of the four men seemed to be in any condition to talk as they all were covered in sweat, yet when Max came to stand before Terrance, the older man was smirking, looking like he was simply lounging near a campfire and relaxing.
"Max Hoste… oh how you plagued me, boy. Do you have any idea how much trouble you caused me?"

“Not near enough, or you wouldn’t have done what you did with my sister.”
“Bah, you don’t have any idea what I was doing! You don’t understand the—”
His words were cut off as Max’s hand moved, the back side of it slapping the older man, causing his lips to crack and bleed.
A red aura appeared around Max, and the light in Terrance’s eyes seemed to glow.
“Hah! Now you’re done for! Do you have any idea how long that will last? Years! Prepare to be—”
[Consume is Cleansing JIH1U08]
[Consume has finished Cleansing JIH1U08]
The smirk that had appeared on the attendant’s lips were gone when the aura vanished just a few seconds after.
“How?! That’s not…”
A sneer formed, and Terrance scowled, his eyes narrowing as he watched Max.
“Your skill! It should not have the power to do that! To break the rules of this place! Of this world! When Phaius finds you, he will—”
“Do nothing,” Max said as he bent down. “I’ve met him, and he’s on my side now.”
Spittle flung out as the older man started to move his jaw, his tongue thrashing inside, yet no words were fired back in response.
“Forget me for a moment. I’m going to ask some questions, and as you can see, hurting you won’t matter. Killing you won’t be a problem either. Whatever protection you assumed the system would provide you isn’t there. Only my kindness is something you can hope for.”
The other four men were trembling, and Max could sense their bodies shaking, one of them weeping as he sat in the filth that had escaped his bowls.
“Trust me, it’s far better to help me with what I’m going to ask.”
Clamping his jaw shut, Terrance shook his head, both eyebrows becoming one bushy line of hair as he stared at his captor.
“What do you do with the *unskilled* , as you call them?”
A simple snort came from the older man, and Max sighed, pulling a knife from his storage. The simple knife was one he had crafted in the arena on the other world, its black glass shimmering in the light.
“Tanila, would you go and summon Batrire? I’m going to need her in a few.”
“Don’t do anything drastic till I get back,” she replied, moving toward the door.
Laughing, Max slid the robe up until the well-toned quad of his captive was free.
Winking once, he plunged the blade into Terrance’s thigh, a slight howl escaping the weathered lips before the older man bit down harder.
“I won’t. I’ve barely begun to scratch the surface.”
The red glow surrounded him for about five seconds before vanishing again.
Sighing, Tanila moved quickly, knowing what he planned to do.
After she had left, Max pulled the knife free, stuck his finger inside, and tapped against the bone he had penetrated too.
The pained sound that came from Terrance for a few seconds proved that even the older man wasn’t immune to pain.
“If you’re smart, you’ll talk now, because once our healer gets here, this is going to get a lot worse.”
“I… won’t say…”
Max moved his finger around inside the leg, poking and prodding, cutting off any response that had been meant to dissuade him from this plan of action.
“Have it your way. Just know, everything I’ve suffered for the last year is going to be paid forward, and the interest to be collected may be too much to pay.”
***
“I… I can’t go back in,” Batrire said as she leaned against the outside of the stone building. “I understand, Max, but… even this is too much for you.”
Her voice warbled slightly as she spoke, and he nodded.
“Let me ask a question, and then you decide if it’s too much. What would you do if that man had attempted to do those things to Fowl, or to your parents? Would it be too much then?”

“That’s not fair! You and I both know the answer to that!”
“And yet he did it to my sister almost. He did it to me,” Max replied. “How many other teens has he done this to? Can we even begin to imagine the number of families that have been torn apart because of his actions?”
Their healer glanced over at Tanila, who frowned and shrugged.
Cordellia had the same expression as their mage, and when Batrire looked at Fowl, she began to nod.
“Fine… I’ll keep going… Just know I may need some time to recover after all this. You also need to know he’s at the limits of what can apparently be said. Each time you go down that one path of questioning, his heart almost stops.”
“What if you word it differently?” Fowl asked as he moved closer to Batrire and gently squeezed her arm.
“I’m trying,” Max replied. “Trust me… I’ve asked about a dozen ways at who is behind this, or what group is leading this, or where I can go to find out more answers. Each time we hit this roadblock.”
Gently, the warrior banged the back of his head against the stone wall on the outside of the building.
“That seems impossible. I mean what kind of magic can bind someone so badly that they can’t tell you anything without dying?”
“Everett has such a thing for my secret,” Max replied. “So there must be things even greater than that.”
“Yeah but where do these fools go once they are done with all the Choosing Days? I mean how long—”
Their warrior found himself unable to speak when Max moved so quickly and lifted him off the ground, starting to spin the dwarf around in circles.
“Put me down… I’m going to puke!”
Laughing, Max set his friend down and smiled, rubbing the brown hair on his short friend’s head.
“You’re a genius!”
Sputtering, Fowl glanced at everyone else and saw that Tanila had started to smile.
“What… I mean sure, I’m a genius… but why don’t you tell the other two how I’m a genius so they’ll know as well.”
“Where do they go after they are done with this? What if they have an unskilled? All of us know that they take them somewhere, but perhaps I’ve asked the wrong question on how to find out where!”
“It might work,” Tanila said as she motioned to the open doorway. “You better give it a try as the sun will be up in a few hours, and I have no doubts that word is traveling like a fire across dry grass. Besides, you don’t want your sister and family to come out here and see this.”
Whistling, Max nodded and after messing up Fowl’s hair once more, strode inside.
***
Deep, labored breaths came from Terrance, and the sweat that drenched his naked body, except for the smallclothes Max had left on him, ran like streams of water.
“We… take… everything…” After a few more breaths and a grunt that sounded like it was being wrenched from his soul, the older man spoke again. “To a secret location to the north of the capital.”
Gasping for air, their captive trembled as if he had somehow managed to escape a horrible fate by what had been shared just now.
“Can any of you point to the place on our map where we need to go?” Max asked as he turned to the four men, each of them wide-eyed from what they were witnessing.
“Me!”
“I can!”
Grinning, Max nodded, and walls began to grow up from the ground, creating small boxed-off areas that left the four attendants unable to see where one of the others might point.
“You get one chance. When I’m certain you’re telling the truth, I’ll let you go. But if I believe you’re lying…” Max paused, motioning to Terrance, who was only held

upright by the stone blocks surrounding his hands. “You’ll also get to experience what he did.”
***
“It’s all basically the same location,” Tanila stated as she compared the places each captive had pointed at. “I’m not sure what’s out there, as any map I’ve ever seen hasn’t a base or a town listed there.”
“So we’re leaving? Going to the capital and then up north?” Fowl asked. “What about those five men?”
“I’ll be taking four of them with us to Peltagow. The other one won’t be making the trip,” Max replied. “I can’t for a moment begin to believe he’ll ever face justice, and I won’t loose him upon the kingdom again.”
“But you’re talking about…”
“Which is why none of you need to see this next part,” Max said. “He can’t live.”
All five of them stood there in silence, a few frowns present, but heads began to slowly move up and down.
“He’s right, my love,” Batrire said. “Come, let’s go inside and eat. Perhaps we can get a little rest before we start the journey home.”
Max watched as the two dwarves and then Cordellia moved back to the tent, leaving just him and Tanila outside of the stone building.
“You’re not going to go inside?”
She shook her head.
“I’m with you. Besides, I want to see how you handle this.”
“Actually I was thinking about asking Bob if—”
“No! If you’re going to do this, do not pawn it off. The problem with leading, making change, and doing what is right is sometimes you have to be the one that hands out punishment. All night you’ve tortured that man. Now it’s time to end it.”
She is right. Do not ask me to do what you must learn to do. There is coming a time when you will have to do more of this, and there is no better time than now to prepare yourself.
Max nodded, and the glass dagger he found himself holding a lot more often was in his hand.
“Let’s get this over with.”

19 Chapter 348 - Always the Good Guy https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2049101/chapter-348-always-the-good-guy;[2025-02-06 13:49]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/amazon/B0DSCC19QS]

Chapter 348 - Always the Good Guy

It seems stupid… only one skill?
Do not blame me. I simply am the tool that operates under the rules set forth by the system. However, I, too, am surprised at what he had.
[Skill Consumed is Weaker than Rank of Current Skill]
[Power stored for future use]
[Skill Consumed is Weaker than Rank of Current Skill]
[Power stored for future use]
[Skill Consumed is Weaker than Rank of Current Skill]
[Power stored for future use]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]

[Would you like to learn [Butaru - Hand to Hand Fighting]?]
[Yes / No]
What were all the skills that it appears we already know?
One was a concealing skill like yours, the second was a form of intimidation, and the other I couldn't tell. It was the first and weakest of all of them, so perhaps it was simply a type of defense?
But he was weak… I mean… wasn't he?
Compared to you, most are weak. When you snapped his neck instead of using your dagger, how hard was it to do? Couldn't you have just as easily ripped his head off?
Max nodded, staring at the corpse that was at his feet.
Blank eyes stared upward. Sighing, he created a stone casket from one of the walls, sealing up the corpse like a form-fitting statue. After it was done, he used his stone skills to drive it deep into the ground, at least thirty feet under the soil, and then left it there.
"Thank you for choosing to end him that way," Tanila said, her voice cutting through the silence.
"You were right. It was a better way to do it."
He turned toward the four who stared at him and trembled as he moved closer to where they were sequestered.
"We're going to leave soon. You'll be coming with me, but I expect no trouble. Ask for help from anyone you see, and there won't be a second chance. I don't care if it's a guard or the queens themselves. Do you understand?"
All four nodded frantically in response.
"Good. I'll ensure you get something to eat soon. For now, I need to take care of a few more things before we go."
Motioning toward the door, he followed Tanila, who left first, choosing to leave the opening there to air out some of the stench.
"Are you certain now is the time to push part of your plan?"
Frowning, Max nodded and blinked, seeing the sunlight slowly start to show itself far away. A beautiful sky of oranges and reds painted a picture that seemed alive, so opposite of what he had just done all night.
"There isn't time, and if they don't want to come with us right now, we need to go. Time is running out. I need to find somewhere for this dragon to hatch, and we still have to get Batrire and Fowl home for a wedding."
She snorted and moved to where Max was, wrapping her arms around him and putting her forehead against his.
"I love you. I know that wasn't easy, but you showed yourself capable of doing things most wouldn't have the strength to do."
"Trust me, if I never had to do that again, I would choose that path."
After a moment of holding each other, Max kissed her and then led her toward the tent.
"Let's get this over with."
***
His parents and sister sat in their chairs, eyes scanning the table where over a hundred gold coins were sprawled out.
"How…"
"He's a tower climber, Mom. That's how."
His mother nodded at Stacy's words but couldn't help but stare at the coin in her fingers.
"Son, you don't need to give us all your money," his dad said.
Laughing, Max began to pull out more bags, dropping them on the table with a thud. After four more bags were there, he pulled out some gems from storage, setting a variety of other costly objects on the wood.
"He likes to show off," Fowl muttered. "Makes my gold pile feel so small."
"I'm not showing off, just simply proving a point. You four can live safely in the capital and do whatever you want. No longer would you have to live here, worried

about how the other townspeople might act. You would be safe and provided for. As your son and brother, I can't think of anything else I can do to help take care of you."
"What about training me to fight?"
Grinning, Max nodded as he began to put away the treasure he had placed on the table.
"There will be a time that I will go with you in a dungeon or two. Nothing would make me happier than that, but for now, I need to take care of a few things. Besides, these two beautiful dwarves are waiting to return home to get married, and I made a promise. If you choose to stay, I cannot tell you how long it will be before I can return."
"You're not giving us a lot of time to think about this," his mother complained. "I mean… this is our family home."
"It is, and yet it's not a home anymore, simply a shell of what once was. Instead, you can go to the capital and help Stacy start a new home. Perhaps she might even find a nice person there."
A groan followed, and her sister turned slightly and showed him her middle finger while keeping it hidden from their parents.
"Not that I'm looking right now," she protested.
"I know," Max teased. "I'm just saying we need to decide, as I need to leave no later than tomorrow. Think about it, and talk amongst yourselves. I need to go into town and take care of a few things. While I do, you can go inside the house, but don't go in the stone building I created."
His father scoffed and shook his head.
"You created a building like that in a night… seems you are much stronger than I can even imagine, son. I have so many questions, and yet… I'm just grateful you're here."
"As am I, Dad. Now if you'll excuse me, I must return to town and speak with Captain Molo and the mayor."
His mother began to laugh as she shook her head.
"My Max… talking with the mayor as if it's nothing… oh, how so much has changed since he hid from all the physical work and tried just to spend time in the kitchen baking."
"He still bakes when he can," Tanila declared, pulling a small box from her dimensional storage. "In fact, I happen to have a few treats he made a while back still saved."
His family looked at her and then at Max, who nodded, seeing them smiling.
"I promise you, he hasn't killed any of us yet," Tanila teased.
***
"Max Hoste… Seth Pendal… Champion of the Arena."
Nodding for the hundredth time, he watched as the mayor sat behind his desk, staring at him.
This was the only time he had ever been invited to the office, and Max was impressed with the number of paintings, tapestries, and other objects that decorated the wood-paneled space.
"Mr. Mayor, we really need—"
"Dameon, please. I'm not sure I deserve the title when compared to yours. It would be like the queens sitting in those chairs."
Captain Molo snorted and shook his head.
"I secured the shard as you asked, and we have sent a note to the adventurer's hall. I have no doubt they will make a formal request for it soon. Tell me, do you want me to give it to them?"
"You should," Max replied. "There is no reason for our city to face any other problems from them. Besides, I'm fairly certain our hall isn't a part of whatever has been going on."
"Stealing away teens… and you still don't know why?"
Glancing at the mayor, Max shook his head.

Dameon was taller than many. His broad frame and six-foot-six height added a presence that made most back down. He had been escorted through dungeons and reached the fortieth level, having multiple administration skills and the physical and mental power most wouldn't imagine a mayor having.
"Nothing good, I'm afraid. Also, the older one, Terrance, is dead."
"Self-defense is a great way of resolving many of those problems," Molo said. "I'm just glad you don't have to walk around with the aura on you. Even though I'm certain none could harm you."
"Tell me, the body?"
"Disposed of."
Dameon nodded, a slight frown only present for a few seconds.
"No worries, just asking. And do not be concerned about your parents and sister. We have sent word to many in the city about how they should be treated. Still, three skills for your sister? Does she have any idea when she will start the training program?"
"That I'm not sure of, but I've also offered to take them to Peltagow with me. It might be better for them in the long run. If they go, I'll trust you to handle selling the property if my father wants to. For now, I plan on leaving first thing in the morning."
"So quickly?" Dameon asked. "You just got here! I mean… our town has…"
The mayor went silent, frowning as he and Molo exchanged a few glances.
"We owe your family an apology… I know how they were treated wasn't fair, and to hear that we were lied to has upset a few of the others in the town whose children were taken as well. Surely you could help ease some of their suffering and perhaps give them hope."
Max shook his head, doing his best to keep his composure.
"I won't lie to them," he replied. "The odds of any of them still being alive is almost impossible. To do such a thing is worse. Just make sure they know that I will seek out whoever is responsible and do whatever I can to extract…"
He caught himself not using the word he wanted to.
"Justice."
"That is all we can hope for, then, I guess," Dameon replied. "Is there anything else we can do to help ease the pain you and your family have endured?"
Shaking his head, Max stood and held out a hand.
"No. I've got a few other errands to run, and if you don't mind, I will sneak out. There was already a crowd in the street that was following me. Most of them are the families of the teens I gave a coin to, trying to thank me again. Others are those hoping I might give them one as well."
Sighing, Max felt the strings that constantly tugged at his heart.
"How many teens were there, not of noble or higher blood? Those whose families are on the lower end of the income scale?"
Closing his eyes and scratching his chin momentarily, the mayor shook his head from side to side.
"Seventy? Maybe ninety? I'm not sure. Why?"
In each hand, a coin bag appeared, and Max dropped them on his desk.
"There is one hundred gold. Ensure that each teen who could use one gets one, but also ensure that those who do are in need. I may come back at a later date and verify who received them."
A slight chuckle came from Molo, and Dameon just nodded, ignoring the grin on the captain's face.
"One last thing."
Another pouch hit the desk, and the mayor coughed twice, banging his chest once.
"Find a way to let the town celebrate. There are fifty gold coins inside. When I return, I expect to hear about a party rivaling anything the capital has ever thrown. Again, ensure everyone who wants to come can and that all of it is free."
"We will make it so," Dameon said as he moved around the desk and held a hand out to Max. "I… I feel bad now. Not once did I know who you were until they said you

were unskilled and you somehow escaped. Now, seeing you and hearing about what you have done and are doing, I wonder if others are like you in our town."
"The only way you'll ever find out is if you spend time with them. Besides, it appears the city has seen a bumper crop of new adventurers spring up. Perhaps you might help them prepare for what comes next."
"I'm already on that," Molo said as he held out a hand to Max. "For what it's worth, I always knew you were special."
Laughing, he shook the captain's hand.
"You don't need to lie to me. We both knew I was lazy."

20 Chapter 349 - One Last Goodbye

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Chapter 349 - One Last Goodbye

"These are some of our best-selling cookies and our number-one muffins! Would you like to try a sample?"
Max nodded, waiting as Nancy deftly cut one of the muffins into pieces and handed him one on a small napkin.
Taking a bite, he could taste the fresh cream and blueberries that were almost magically combined inside the fluffy treat.
"Wow, I can see why these sell so well! Could I get a dozen of them?"
Whipping her head back and tossing one of the strands of red hair that had escaped her head cloth, Nancy smiled and bobbed her head.
"Of course! Anything else?"
Shaking his head, Max watched as she moved to where the boxes were pre-built and began loading them from the glass plate they were displayed on. Her hands moved deftly, and she had filled out, obviously eating a little more of her treats than usual.
You don't feel a thing… it's weird. The sensation inside you. Relief?
Sometimes, I forget how perceptive you are. You are correct, though. Part of me wanted this life, but now… I'm glad that I got you, even though I've had to deal with all the problems that came our way. Still, seeing her and knowing she is happy makes all this easier.
Yet you're not willing to show yourself to her. Would you rather not see how she reacts to knowing you're alive? Getting to see if she shows remorse for running away?
No… that wouldn't be fair, and what she might have endured or experienced because of that day isn't something I would wish upon anyone.
"Here you go!"
Max smiled and took the yellow box and noticed the green ribbon that had been tied around it to keep it sealed.
"Thank you. I'll look forward to eating and sharing these with some friends."
Taking a gold coin from his storage, he slid it across the wooden counter toward Nancy, whose green eyes began to grow.
"I… I don't think I have change for that! Do you have anything smaller?"
"No change needed. Just keep baking and enjoying what you're doing," Max said as he stored the box and moved toward the door.
He caught his reflection in the window, the gray hair, weathered skin, and enough freckles to make any red-headed child feel unable to compare.
"Are you sure?!" she called out as he pushed the door open.
"I am! Thank you for the treats!"
Her reply was cut off as the door shut behind him and Max moved down the steps, spotting the one who had been following him for a few blocks.

“You’re a horrible spy,” Max said as he moved to where Cordellia was standing, pretending to inspect some clothing set outside a shop a few doors down.
“Excuse me? Do I know you?”
“Oh, forgive me… I thought you were some elven archer that couldn’t hit a dwarf standing five feet away instead of a blond-haired human.”
A snort came from his target, and she turned her full attention toward him.
“Sorry… I just wanted to make sure you wouldn’t do anything stupid.”
Max shrugged and motioned down the street away from the bakery.
“You’re fine. I know why you did it, and part of me can’t hate the reason. Tanila is important to you and to me. She’s lucky to have a friend like you. Though part of me wonders if you bet with Fowl how this visit might have gone.”
A scowl formed on the middle-aged face that Cordellia was hiding behind.
“That warrior is never going to let me live this down!” she exclaimed, waving her hands in the air. “He told me I was being stupid, and I didn’t believe him.”
Nudging her with an elbow, Max chuckled.
“Trust me, I’m only in love with one woman, and no one else will ever change that.”
***
“Do you remember this? You used to complain if someone else used it and didn’t clean it off enough.”
Max smiled as his mother went through their kitchen, pulling a few items out.
He had scouted out the house last night and saw that they had done a little bit of work to clean it up, but the filth from a year of doing nothing was still present. Dust, dirt, caked-on stains, and other trash was scattered through the house.
“How many times did I practice my baking skills with that?”
“Too many,” his mother replied, wiping it off again. “Do you want to take it with you?”
Shaking his head, Max smiled.
“While I can bake, and I even have the skill, it’s not the life for me now. Perhaps one day. Until then, you can hold on to it or decide if you want to leave it here. Either way, you have plenty of room in that chest.”
Sniffing, she nodded, flipping it over a few more times before moving to the dimensional storage chest he had given them that sat on the family kitchen table.
It had been ready to fall apart, but his Wood Mastery skill allowed him to fix it completely, turning it into a single piece of timber.
“Max, can I bother you?”
Hearing his sister calling from the back bedrooms, he left his mother there, dodging the trash as he moved, and went to his sister.
She sat on her bed, holding a sword that looked out of place in a bedroom with a crib and toys for a baby.
“What is that?”
“Just a basic sword I was given by you know who… I held on to it… always hoping he would come back and collect it or take me with him to go adventuring. Now… I just want to destroy it.”
“Or we could have some fun with it and leave it here in case Caleb ever does return.”
Cocking her head, Stacy studied her brother’s face.
“That smirk… why is it I’m keenly interested in what you have in mind?”
Laughing, Max motioned to the hallway he had just come from.
“Let’s go outside, and I’ll show ya.”
***
“A sword stuck in stone? I mean, can’t someone just lift this?”
Pointing at the rock he had created with his skill, Max grinned.
“Go tug on it. See if you can.”
Fowl whistled as Cordellia jumped onto the four-foot high stone stretching about nine feet in both directions.
Wrapping her hands around the hilt, she began to tug, grunting as nothing happened besides her face turning red.

After a second attempt, a curse word not meant for most to hear escaped her lips, and she frowned at Max.
“Can anyone actually pull this free?”
“Maybe. Or they might break the sword first, but I could pull it out with a little trick. Still, I’m certain it will provide a lot of entertainment for anyone who comes.”
Stacy snorted and pointed at the writing he had put in the front of the stone.
A test of commitment. A promise to return.
One day, someone might pull this sword free.
Until then, remember never to give a woman a weapon.
She might use it to hurt you.
“I’m fairly certain his parents will get the meaning of this, but it’s funny as heck.”
Giving his sister a hug, Max nodded.
“Better than you stabbing him with it.”
“Maybe,” she replied.
***
“We’re ready, son.”
Motioning for his family to join him, his father gave one last glance at their property, moving to where the four men were all stacked upon each other again, Max straddling their legs once more.
“That looks so weird,” Fowl muttered. “I mean… never mind, you humans.”
Ignoring his friend, he turned to Tanila, who smiled, nodding as she came and put an arm through his.
“Everyone touching me?”
As they all called out that they were, Max looked at the baby he held in his other arm, seeing the blue eyes staring up at him.
“Let’s go see your new home, Callie,” he said with a grin.
***
“Seth’s back!”
Shouts began to ring out as others noticed the group moving toward the Faction house, a group of men in just undergarments with only their wrists bound in stone following behind.
“What are they building?” his father asked as they moved near another new building that was almost done.
“Lots of things. Rooms for Faction members, training areas, and crafting sections. Our Faction is growing faster than most, and the need to find places for people to live and train requires new buildings.”
“And they’ll have room for us?”
Smiling at his mother, he nodded.
“Oh, don’t worry, they have a special place for you. One that is reserved just for us and never in use unless we are here or I ask them to let you use it.”
She glanced at Tanila, who was smiling.
“Just how special are you?”
“Oh, gods, don’t ask that, or we’ll never get his head in through the double doors,” Fowl teased.
Laughter came from the other four of his party as his family tried to figure out what all they were missing and the legend of Max.
***
“A baby in the Faction house. How long has it been since such a thing like that has taken place?” Tom asked as he reclined in a chair.
“At least ten or fifteen years,” Everett replied. “Now then, how long till you leave us again? I have it on good authority that Batrire is anxious to return to her home and put a ring through Fowl’s nose.”
“Bah, no one’s putting a ring on my nose!” their dwarf exclaimed, spilling some ale from his cup.
“I’ll put a ring somewhere if you don’t pipe down and be quiet,” their healer said, elbowing him slightly.
“Three days,” Max said.

“Not a lot of time, but I understand. Tell me, are you really asking me to keep those four men detained?”
“If I could ask anyone else I would. I told the four of them they have one month to behave. Doing so will net them freedom. Not doing so means death, and there isn’t a place they can hide. I might have lied and told them I put a tracking spell on them and will use it to find them if they do attempt to run away.”
Tom began to howl, shaking his head as he closed his eyes.
“The legend continues to grow,” their trainer declared. “It’s bad enough I have people asking me if they think they will ever be like you. All I can do is promise them that if they train with me enough, perhaps they will be worthy to catch a glimpse of the shadow you cast from the top of the tower.”
Cordellia let out a groan.
“I never knew what I was getting into when you gave me this party.”
“Want out?” Max asked.
“Oh gods no, I’m just saying. I still can’t believe we’re about to try and find a hidden fortress, get some answers, and then stroll off and have a dwarven wedding.”
As everyone laughed and caught up, Max felt Tanila leaning toward him, her lips close to his ear.
“Promise me you won’t be stupid for three days.”
“I can’t lie to you,” he replied with a wink. “Still, if I do, I’ll make sure to let you know beforehand.”
Sighing, she nodded and yawned.
“I’m going to turn in. Some of us have been up most of the last two days. If you don’t mind, I’ll leave these three men to discuss something I’m sure none of us want to be part of.”
As their mage rose and moved toward the door, Cordellia quickly followed.
“That’s our cue, my love,” Fowl said as he pushed her toward the edge of the couch. “Time for the big boys to have adult conversations.”
“How about I take you upstairs and show you adult things?”
Faster than Max could recall, Fowl was racing toward the door, a single wave of his hand as he moved to get it open.
Once it shut and the three of them were left alone, he felt both men staring at him.
“Why do I feel like each of you has about a hundred questions?”
“I’ve got more than that,” Tom replied, sitting up in his chair. “Still, we found what you were looking for and know it’s important, so we’re leading with it.”
Everett stood up and moved to the small table, quickly storing the cups and plates that were on it, wiping it off with a towel and then laying down a map he summoned from storage.
“This is where you need to go” he said, pointing to a spot in some mountains far to the south. “It costs a lot to get actual intel I believe, but if you’re looking for a place with dragons, here is where you need to go.”
In his mind, Max saw the distance and frowned.
“That is a bit of a way away. How far is that?”
“For most people? A month?”
We can do it in three days, maybe four.
That’s just one way.
Still, you can wait on the other. Time is running out on this egg, and you do not want the responsibility to care for it. Even worse is if it hatches while in your storage. While it is a unique creature, it would die in there instantly. Only the shell protects it from the magic that would kill all other things.
“How your face just changed tells me you’re about to leave,” Everett stated. “Can you even make this trip?”
Cracking his neck and then letting out a yawn, Max nodded.
“It won’t be fun, but I can. I guess I better go tell Tanila I’m going to be stupid.”
Snorting, Tom stood and held out a hand.
“If I don’t see you again, know that you learned the ultimate lesson.”
“What’s that?”

“Never tell a woman you’re going to be stupid.”
Laughing, Max shook his trainer’s hand and moved toward the door.
“I’ll be back as quickly as possible. And thank you again for taking in my family.”
Everett simply waved and nodded as they watched him leave the room.
“We putting bets on how quickly he returns?” the Faction leader asked as he rolled up the map and stored it.
“No! Every time we do, I lose money!”
Laughing, Everett shrugged.
“Someday, you’ll actually get paid for working here instead of using it to cover all of those losses.”

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Chapter 350 - In Need of a Dragon

She was not happy, but it appeared that Tanila understood.
You and I both know no one could keep up with us for this long. All we can do is focus on covering as much distance as possible.
You’re correct, but the exertion will finally catch up with you. Do you have a plan for once you reach the area the dragons are supposed to be in? Besides walking up and asking if one will raise the egg you carry.
There are no other options. Returning it to its original world would be problematic if we cannot find someone to care for it here. Adding such a creature to that environment, being so young and weak, would create potential problems and power struggles I don’t want to consider. We still don’t know if Jazzjak and Quilazmore are alive and managing things.
And yet you still want to return and check in on the place. Is that a battle we need to fight right now? You are right to believe that the potential power and gains that can be made from keeping the world operating as it is are worth it, but that would mean changing what you are doing now. Are you ready to leave this world again?
Maybe... but you know we wouldn’t go alone.
Yet could you protect them if you brought your friends?
Letting go of the ice spear that he had been holding onto that was flying across the sky, Max landed on the air, one right underneath him, balancing on it as it carried him high above the ground to the south.
He knew Bob was right, and that truth had kept him from already checking in on the other world. In a place like that, if someone tried to harm his friends there, it would be a real test of his strength and resolve.
Eventually, we’ll have to return, and I won’t leave them behind. The longer I wait to go back, the more likely someone will attempt to gain power. What kind of fight could I be walking into then?
There will always be a fight wherever you go, Max. You seem to keep forgetting that you are going to face conflict. Someone will always want what you have or desire to destroy you simply because of the threat you present. The day will come when you find yourself standing alone, facing everything the system can throw at you.
You always make it seem so bleak.
A chuckle came from inside his head, and Max couldn’t help but grin as he moved through the night sky, most likely invisible to anyone who looked up.
***
That looks like what we’re searching for.

A large opening was hidden in the shadows of the seventh mountain they had been searching along.
Dark clouds drifted overhead, filled with the ash from the volcanoes that had become visible the night before as the lava flowed down the black stone that housed the molten rock.
The last one was too small, and the beasts inside were nothing more than food.
Bob created an air spear that allowed Max to ride it down from the sky, moving toward the opening that stood out from all the other shadows.
I'm glad we're doing this during the daytime instead of at night. Without light, I can't imagine seeing anything amidst all this smoke.
It's the perfect place to be a hunter.
Checking the sky once more, Max nodded.
As he drew near, the size of the cave revealed itself to be larger than either of them had expected, easily being at least fifty yards high and almost two-thirds that wide.
This looks like the place.
Both could see the marks in the stone that bore scratches where something had used the extended shelf along the mountain to launch and land from.
Are you still going to go in?
There is no telling if what we're looking for is inside or out hunting. We'll go slow. Besides, you and I both know how to defeat a dragon if we have to. Combined with that knowledge and whatever mark I received from the dungeon, I'd suspect something this large should show some semblance of intelligence.
We both know what assume spells, but you're right.
A thread of amusement moved through his mind.
Dropping from the spear as it vanished, Max's boots crunched against the hard stone, his presence and arrival creating a sound that felt louder than it should.
As he moved slowly toward the cave, he and Bob reacted simultaneously.
Traps!
A layer of magic covered the stone and led into the cave entrance, noticed by his own command of magic and the Trap Detection skill.
It would appear that this beast is intelligent, after all. To have such a thing in place would reflect a knowledge of magic and the need to have something that protects its home. The question is, why?
He could read Bob's concern and the knowledge that there might be a trap that could do considerable harm or simply notify the owner of this place that someone had trespassed.
What could it be nervous about? Other dragons? Surely not people like us. Who would venture this far to simply fight a dragon in these places?
Everett did tell you some said a few dragons were in this area. They might have to deal with other dragons who invade their home.
Tapping his boots against the stone just a few steps from where the aura of magic lay across, Max considered his choices.
I wish I had a disarm trap skill now.
Laughter echoed in his head.
Yes… why not go find an assassin or rogue group, see who has one, and then take it from them?
He ignored the joke, studying how far the aura seemed to travel across the open stone.
What if we flew over it? Used the magic like we have to travel here?
It should work, since it appears that only touching the aura would set it off, and it seems to go into the entrance. Still if they can create a trap like this which easily extends at least a hundred yards for this ledge and into their home, the power they command is impressive.
Max pulled a piece of dried meat out and ate it, then used a water skin to wash it down. After a minute, he withdrew one of the muffins he had bought back in Alundra and let out a sigh after consuming it.

Well I'm about as ready as I'll be. Ready when you are.
Slowly, Max glided into the massive opening on a wind spear, staying above the stone floor beneath him by about twenty feet, feeling the presence of the trap and all the mana contained within.
Occasionally, he had to swap between ice and wind spears, following the cave's twisting and turning as it descended into the mountain. Darkness was all around after the light from the opening vanished well over a minute ago, and his Sonar skill told him where every crack, stone, and bug that skittered across the floor was, along with any small creatures hiding behind anything they thought would protect themselves from his presence.
Seems funny that they can sense us.
We give off an aura that some can sense. Those creatures have learned to sense the passing of whatever lives within this cave and know not to get in its way.
Considering Bob's point, Max's nose started to twitch slightly, the scent of smoke beginning to drift up in one tunnel as they made their way downward.
It's widening some… and that smoke…
A possible sign we are coming up somewhere with fire. I am ready.
Let's move closer to the ground. My skill isn't warning me of anything up here now.
Drifting lower, Max continued his descent into the creature's lair, only a few feet from the stone floor now.
Nothing shows up on my skill. Thoughts?
It matters not to me. Both ways have pros and cons.
He could sense those thoughts of his skill.
Walking might make noise, even with the sound of wind and the echoing in his ears. All it would take is one rock sent skittering across the floor to make a noise something could potentially hear. Likewise, moving through the air could cause other problems, such as using magic sometimes detectable by some races and beings. Even he could sense the use sometimes, depending on the power within a being. Similar to how he could tell that Phaius and Ockrim were both stronger than him.
There is no telling how deep this will go. Even worse, I can see the grooves of the creature that moves along this tunnel. It has to be a dragon, close to the size Kuneoss was.
Bob didn't say a word, simply laughing as the spear Max had been standing on began to move closer to the ground and then vanished a few inches above it.
Doing his best to be quiet, Max ignored the smoke that tickled his nose and irritated it and quietly continued his descent through the darkness.
***
It has to be sleeping. The breathing is too slow and steady.
Never underestimate a dragon. We learned that the hard way.
Max wanted to groan but didn't, keeping his breathing steady and slow. He had seen the light coming from the opening further ahead and adjusted to the smell of rotten eggs and the acidic taste in his mouth.
Water dripped from the stones around him as heat billowed through the tunnel upward, gently running down the side of the stone walls before vanishing as the heat evaporated it.
I can feel the temperature of this floor. We might be right above a lava flow.
So don't use your stone skill to dig into it. I'd rather not test how much damage that might do to you.
Grumbling internally, Max knew Bob had been right when he had wanted to use his magic to just burrow through the stone, creating a shaft for him to travel through. The process could be quicker, but he was also not sure if the direction would have been right as multiple turns had taken place. His mind had created a map of most of the cavern, and he could now easily recall much of what he saw due to his skills and stats.
Fine, let's just go and see what lies down there.
[Stealth]

Max’s steps became silent even to him with his Sonar skill, the improvement of the ability now showing its true colors as he worked his way toward the opening he knew was ahead.
Each second passed without any change in the breathing he had heard. No sound was out of place, nor did it appear that their approach was being detected at all.
Slowly, the opening to where all the light and heat was coming from came into view, and Max paused for a moment, blinking as he saw lava running in a circular pattern down parts of the cavern. Like a hollowed-out sphere, a river of molten stone swirled toward a large section in the middle, creating a walkway that had to be fifty yards wide.
This space inside the mountain. It’s about half a mile wide, at least.
More than that. And look, it appears we have found the owner of this place.
Max had already seen what Bob had been talking about.
A red dragon lay on a large stone floor, its scales shimmering in the orange and red light the lava gave off.
Its head was pointed at the opening where he stood near the left side, peering in.
Both of its gold eyes were open, locked exactly upon him.
“Welcome. I was wondering when you might finally show yourself.”
Those words echoed through the cavern and reverberated in his chest.
It is a shame your small companion isn’t here.
Why is that?
Because right now, I’m pretty confident he would say *holy elf tits* and, for once, have the timing perfect.
Max couldn’t help it as he laughed, seeing the dragon’s lips pull upward, giant teeth now displayed.

22 Chapter 351 - An Offer

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2055186/chapter-351-an-offer;[2025-02-10 10:28]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/93116/in-the-shadow-of-mountains-a-litrpg-adventure]

Chapter 351 - An Offer

“I am not one to be laughed at, human. Tell me, how do you have my father’s marking? If it were not for that, I would have already acted and enjoyed the taste of your flesh.”
Clearing his throat, Max moved with confidence, chest out, and right toward the dragon, who slowly lifted its large head.
“He and I spoke in the trial upon reaching level fifty. To say how I got it would be breaking our agreement, but if you can sense it now, you’re different from the other dragons I met.”
His massive host cocked its head sideways, never taking its golden eyes off him.
“I am Max Hoste. Tell me, what is your name?”
Slowly, the dragon rose to its feet, reaching its full sitting height, and didn’t even come to a fourth of the height of the cavern.
Each scale looked hardened, healthy, and almost radiant. It shifted slightly, bending its neck toward him, producing a shimmering effect.
“I am even more intrigued now. A human with the mark of my father and speaking the tongue that only dragons know. What has changed in your kingdom that such a

thing could exist? It has been thousands of years since one of your kind has spoken our language."
Max fought to keep his face straight as the dragon spoke. Now, its voice no longer caused his chest to vibrate, and he could sense the shift in its words.
Did you know I was speaking in the dragon language?
A sensation like a sigh came from inside his mind.
I assumed you did but it would appear that was not the case. Yes, her first words were in their tongue, and you didn't realize that you had simply responded in kind.
Her?! It's a female dragon? How can you tell?
Laughter came from Bob, and Max would have believed his cheeks had turned slightly red, ready to blame it on the searing heat around him.
I am not your father and do not feel the need to point out dragon anatomy. If you cannot figure that out… perhaps you can ask Tanila to teach you.
The laughter grew, and Max shook his head, unable to hold back, and smiled.
"Forgive me. I must also compliment you on your appearance. I have yet to encounter a dragon with scales as beautiful as yours. Truly, yours shine almost as brightly as your father's. He would be very proud of his daughter."
Her lips pulled back, and a toothy smile appeared for a few seconds before a thrumming sound escaped her mouth and caused her body to shake.
"Dear Father, what have you found? A human who not only carries your mark, speaks our language, but spins words better than most males of our kind who might wish to lay with me!"
Lifting her head toward the ceiling, the dragon continued to howl for half a minute, before slowly relaxing and sighing as she fixed her gaze again upon him.
"I am called Aerthen. Tell me. Why have you ventured into my home? Surely you are not foolish enough to believe you can come here and kill me or steal my treasure?"
Shaking his head, Max used a hand to wipe his bald head. The sweat that formed had already been wicked away by the heat, but he needed a moment to collect himself.
"I made a promise to another dragon on another world. To keep that commitment, I need the help of a dragon, and so here I am, looking to find one who might be willing to allow me to keep my word."
Aerthen shook her body, her wings flapping a bit and creating gusts of hot wind that swept around the cavern.
"I will hear your request. Come, you may walk the circle of flames, and I promise to not attack, provided you do not attack me."
Grinning, Max fought back the urge to smirk.
"Would it be alright if I just flew over?"
"Fly? You can—"
She stopped questioning as a spear of air formed, and Max jumped onto it, balancing with ease. He then slowly glided across the lava that gave off heat beneath him.
"A mage? In warrior gear? And yet you move with the grace of an elf or a thief."
Both of Aerthen's eyes sparkled in the light, watching as he made it to the other side of the lava barrier and jumped off, landing on the stone floor near her.
Giving a slight bow, Max looked upward, straining his neck to take her in.
"You really are a majestic dragon. To be your size means you have lived a few years."
Laughter came, and the thrumming inside her pushed against him with force, the waves of pressure assaulting him, no longer weakened by the heat of the lava or the distance between them.
"If you were a dragon… I might make requests. Still, I can tell that you will have a hard time conversing like this. Allow me to assist with that."
Her body began to glow a bright orange, and then Max watched as he knew what was coming next.
She is far stronger than we realize. To have that kind of power…
Not the same power as Igarra? Right?
That… I am not certain. Just be careful, Max.

As they talked, Aerthen's body grew smaller until she stood in the center of her stone area, easily ten feet tall and wearing a red dress that matched what her scales did. Flaming red hair cascaded down her dark, tanned skin, and those golden eyes were locked upon him, a smile firmly in place on her lips.
"How is this?"
Max wanted to speak, but he was caught off-guard.
"You… wow."
Laughing, she moved toward him, revealing behind her a red tail hidden by the dress when she first appeared.
As she moved, two large stone chairs appeared, one in each hand and she set them down.
Snapping her fingers, a force rushed past Max, and he felt the air immediately cool, almost like a mid-spring day as a dome of some sort prevented the heat from reaching them.
"That is impressive," he said as he moved toward the chair she placed on the floor. "I've only known and seen one other dragon who could transform like that, and she was very powerful. A world champion."
"And tell me, how did she handle meeting you?" Aerthen asked, sitting in her chair and shifting slightly to pull her tail around, setting it over her lap, slowly playing with the scales.
He couldn't help but wince as he sat down.
"She died. She attempted to keep me from the woman I love and hurt many along the way. So I fought her and killed her."
A cough came from Aerthen, and her eyes widened as she pressed herself back against the stone chair.
"You… claim to have killed one who can do what I have done?! Impossible! Yet…" Her words trailed off as she sat there, slowly relaxing, her eyes glued to him. "I sense no bragging. None of what you have said sounds boastful. I have heard many men and dragons try to exaggerate and make themselves seem bigger, and yet… you do not. Tell me, why would she do such a thing?"
Max sighed, and a bottle of alcohol he knew was worth thousands of gold, taken from Igarra's own stash, appeared.
"Perhaps I can share that story with you while we enjoy a little of her drink."
A crystal goblet appeared in Aerthen's hand, and she held it outward, grinning.
"That would be a tale worthy of hearing."
***
Max felt like an overprotective parent as he watched Aerthen gently stroke the outside of the silver egg. Her fingers caressed each groove, never seeming to leave the outer shell.
With each stroke, he could sense the dragon inside responding, watching the egg move slightly, quivering just a little.
"An egg… such a precious thing."
Her voice was so low that Max might not have heard it without his Sonar skill.
"This is why I need a dragon willing to protect it. To help it grow and teach it how to live."
She snorted and shook her head, gazing at him from above.
"You do not know the value of such a thing, and yet you offer it to me… not knowing what kind of dragon I am. I could be the kind to raise it to ravage the lands, burning down cities and killing all those who live in it."
"And yet, by how you talk and how I see you touch it, I know there is a heart of a woman inside you that desires to have a child," he replied, seeing how she winced at his last words.
"Max Hoste… I cannot… this gift… there is no way I could ever pay you for such a treasure."
"I don't need gold or items. I just need to know you'll let me keep my promise to Kuneoss. Let this child know that their father was a proud dragon. One who wouldn't

bend no matter how heavy the load he was forced to carry. A dragon who sacrificed everything so they could live.”
A sniff came, followed by a tear from each eye, rolling slowly down those tanned cheeks, catching on her red lips, each one licked away a second later.
“This Tanila. The woman you love. She is very lucky to have a man like you. I pray she realizes this.”
“She better,” he replied, winking, glad to see Aerthen smile again.
“Surely, I could give you something. Scales? Teeth?”
“I have plenty for now. The only thing I might ask is if you would allow me to visit and check in on the dragon occasionally. Not because I don’t believe you will raise it right, but because I would like it to know that somewhere is a human that cares about it and will do what I can to protect it, as long as it doesn’t get in too much trouble.”
Her laughter carried far and wide, and he couldn’t help but join her momentarily.
“Well, you got past my first trap and many of the others. I see now I shall have to create a few new ones, since you easily flew over them. It was not something I had anticipated anyone would be able to do. Then again it has been many years since your kind has been foolish enough to venture into my lair. I will need to attune them to you so that they will not cause any harm when you touch them.”
“Part of me wants to learn so much of this magic you possess and many other things, but I don’t have the time for that right now,” he replied. “Besides, now that I have been here, you don’t need to do anything. Whenever I want, I can come to any spot I’ve seen in the cave.”
Her head snapped in his direction, her gaze having drifted down to the egg she was caressing.
“You… can travel?”
“I can, but I would prefer to keep that knowledge a secret. However, since you will be caring for this one, and we both know its value, I’ll trust you with that knowledge as well.”
Two gold eyes blinked rapidly for a few seconds, and then Aerthen shook her head slightly.
“Father was right to choose you to mark. To be that strong… to have the heart I sense in you. It is a rare thing. Know that I will take that secret with me to my death.”
As she spoke, she lifted two fingers, touched them to her lips in a kiss, and then put them against her chest.
“Let’s hope that doesn’t happen. Besides, I need to—”
It’s happening!
Both of them stared at the egg, which was beginning to bounce.
His Sonar skill had told Bob what he now knew.
“It’s hatching!” Aerthen exclaimed. “Come! Join us, and tell us who you are, little one!”

23 Chapter 352 - Wekime Gets Involved

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2056898/chapter-352-wekime-gets-involved;[2025-02-10 10:28]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_links L1,L2]

Chapter 352 - Wekime Gets Involved

“It’s... breathtaking,” he whispered, barely aware that he was speaking aloud.

Aerthen let out a soft rumble of approval, her eyes fixed on the egg. “It is the birth of something magnificent,” she replied, her voice a low thrum. “A hatching dragon’s first moments are a rare sight, even for a dragon such as myself.”
A crack appeared at the peak of the egg, splintering the hard surface with a delicate web of lines. Max leaned closer, his heart pounding as he watched. Another crack followed, spreading down the length of the egg, and for a moment, silence hung in the air. No other sound entered the protective dome that Aerthen had created. Then, with a sudden jolt, a tiny shard fell away, revealing a flash of something glistening inside.
It’s moving. I… cannot remember having ever seen something so beautiful.
Max could feel the sensation of awe inside his mind, a weird feeling derived from his skill, which merged with his own emotions. Together, they stood there as one, eyes focused on the movement before them.
Slowly, a silver claw emerged, pushing against the fractured shell, followed by another. The egg seemed to pulse, its occupant struggling against the confines, each movement more determined than the last. Aerthen watched patiently, a gentle smile playing across her lips.
“He will need to break free on his own,” she said softly. “It is his first challenge.”
“A boy? You can tell?”
“A male,” Aerthen replied, her tone warm, proud and with a sense of amusement. “He is strong.”
Max nodded, barely daring to breathe as he watched the tiny dragon push, crack, and claw its way into the world. The egg split further, and the hatchling’s head finally emerged. Its scales shone like liquid silver, sleek and shimmering, with delicate ridges that hinted at the grandeur it would grow into one day. Its eyes, still cloudy from birth, blinked open, and the baby dragon let out a soft chirping sound.
A grunt came from the eggling, and it thrust its head upward, giving one final push that shattered the egg around him, causing the pieces to fall away and tumble to the warm stone floor beneath it.
He let out a tiny, high-pitched roar that sounded more like a squeak, but inside his chest, Max felt the sound reverberate.
Unable to help himself, Max grinned, bending down slightly and holding out his hand. “Welcome to your new home, little guy,” he murmured.
Another tiny roar came as the dragon sniffed the air, its silver nostrils moving. Then it suddenly let out a sneeze, which sprayed Max with mucus that matched the liquid that coated its scales.
Aerthen’s laugh made the young dragon pull back, the deep tone causing it to lower his head toward the ground.
“You are fine, little one,” she said, bending down on a knee and holding out her hand. Slowly it transformed from the tan skin into a scaled hand.
Once more, those silver nostrils began to twitch as it sniffed the air, slowly moving closer to her outstretched, red-scaled fingers.
With a chirp, it moved quickly, thrusting the crown of his head into her palm and letting those fingers scratch its scales, causing a high-pitched trill to come from his throat.
“Calm down, little one, you are safe.”
As if her words were all that it needed, the eggling turned and glanced at Max, who hadn’t moved at all, still partially covered in mucus it had sprayed him with.
“He is a friend. He brought you here. His name is Max, and you are safe.”
Inside his chest, a sensation welled up, and Max struggled to hold back a flood of tears that wanted to rush outward as the eggling waddled toward him, sniffing his still outstretched hand and then, as it had with Aerthen, thrusting the crown of its head into his palm.
Without needing to be told, his fingers moved, scratching little areas between each soft scale, elated as it trilled from his touch.
A trickle of energy came from their contact, and Max fought not to pull his hand back.
Your hand! It is glowing!

Even though Bob said the obvious, it took him a minute to realize that it was indeed doing that. A warm orange light was coming from where his skin touched the dragon's scales, and Max couldn't stop scratching the eggling.
"Impossible! How can—"
Aerthen stopped talking, and Max felt her move toward him, her scaled hand resting on his bald head.
Immediately, the flow of energy inside him grew, filling his entire body and causing him to tremble.
What? What is happening?!
Don't fight it! Close your eyes. Trust me. Let yourself go. Be who you are, Max.
A simple nod was all he did, the world around him spinning as he knelt down on one knee, the dragon now able to look at him eye to eye, easily the size of the large white wolf he faced a year ago.
It trilled, a throaty, deep noise vibrating inside it, and Max felt Aerthen doing something as well.
Let go. Remember what you believe in and why you do what you do.
To protect those that I love.
Even beyond that.
It didn't take more than a second for Max to sense what Bob was getting at.
To protect everyone who cannot.
A surge of power flowed from his core, racing from his chest, down his arm and into his hand.
The heat grew where skin and scales touched, and the noise the eggling made filled his ears and his mind.
It reverberated inside like when Bob sometimes laughed.
Each time he did, it was intoxicating, and layers of stress that he fought against daily were washed away.
Then it came.
[Rakonath has offered to bond with you.]
[Accept Bond?]
[Yes / No]
In his mind those words seemed to burn with power. It was a sensation like nothing he had ever imagined.
I cannot choose for you, but you must act quickly… the system will not—
[Yes]
Max didn't hesitate any longer.
[Bond Forming]
[Rakonath has accepted Bond]
[Processing]
[Processing]
[Processing]
[Error - World does not support…]
[Override in Process]
[Wekime has approved of Bond]
A jolt of lightning and searing heat raced from his hand to his heart, and Max found himself shaking like a leaf in a windstorm.
Inside, his mind was struggling to handle what it felt. A pressure like no other was pushing against it from outside.
And then like a dam, the wall that held it back broke.
I am Rakonath. I am hungry.
Max's laughter sounded so wrong to himself as his eyelids opened up. There, just a foot away, staring at him, were a pair of silver eyes focused on him. The eggling had shifted closer to him during this whole process.
"Rakonath says he is hungry."
A gasp came from Aerthen, and her hand was trembling as she pulled it away from his head.
"It named itself so quickly… and… it bonded with you?"

“He did,” Max replied, struggling to tear his eyes from the silver pair that seemed to want to hold his gaze forever.
Looking up at Aerthen, he could see tears had run down her tanned cheek, her scaled hand struggling to stop the flow that didn’t seem to abate.
“Is this a bad thing? I mean it doesn’t—”
“No!” she shouted. “This… this is a gift that only our Father can give, and if you have it… I…”
Without waiting, she knelt down, bending her head.
“I am here to serve you, Max Hoste, marked by the Father, the first I have ever learned of to have bonded with one of my kind in this world.”
He rose, his legs feeling wobbly and Rakonath’s head rising with his hand. Turning, Max studied Aerthen with her face toward the ground.
“Please, I do not deserve this. I… I didn’t come here for this.”
And yet… the gods, it appears, have a hand in this moment. That name… Wekime… somewhere in my being itches each time I think of it.
His jaw moved, and yet no words came as Max felt the same itch in his core upon hearing Bob say that name.
“Is your Father called—”
Pain seared in his hand, and Max winced, yanking it free from Rakonath, who let out a cry when he did so. On his palm, a rune he could recognize but not read was glowing and pulsing with power.
A chuckle from Aerthen caused him to look at her.
“You cannot say it. Nor can I. We are prevented from doing so. Our power is not strong enough for that. Had you been able to say it, I would have given you my entire being, all of my treasure, and done whatever you asked.”
Those golden eyes were shining, like a light behind colored glass, giving off a glow that felt unnerving to stare at.
A scaled head nuzzled against his side, and Max saw the silver eggling making a move for his hand.
Hungry. So hungry.
“He is hungry. Can I feed him any kind of food?”
Aerthen’s warm laugh filled the cave, and she shook her head as she stood.
“Rakonath will need fresh food. Allow me to go gather him some. I do not have anything he would desire, and any dried meat would only upset his stomach. For now, he needs fresh blood. Stay, I will fetch some.”
Before he could protest, Aerthen began to run. When she jumped into the air over the lava, her body transformed, growing quickly into the giant red dragon he had first encountered. Each beat of her wings sent air washing over them, and then suddenly, it was gone, no more assault from the wind.
She passed through the barrier she had created. Amazing.
Kneeling again, Max turned his attention to Rakonath. He rubbed along the bones and ridges around his smooth jaw, finding little areas that made the eggling trill.
“So… what am I going to do with you?”
Feed me.
Laughing, Max shook his head, his mind racing at the fact he had somehow bonded with a dragon and was now rubbing its scales.
What are we going to do with this? I can’t take it home.
I’m certain our host will help us, but you are right. He is too small, and that would be another being you would have to protect. We both know many would risk your wrath for what he might be worth.
As the trills Rakonath continued to let out filled his chest, Max shook his head in disbelief.
“Oh, Tanila, wait till I tell you…”
***
Sitting in the stone chair Aerthen had given him, he watched as the eggling snored near his feet, coiled around the chair he was in as best as possible. Each inch of scale

that could touch him while it lay did. The scales over his belly looked ready to burst, having consumed every bit of the two lizard creatures Aerthen had retrieved.
“You’re certain he will be fine?”
Stroking her own red tail that was set across her legs, Aerthen shrugged.
“I have never dealt with a bonded dragon before. There are many things here I am not certain of, other than that you and he are connected. Surely you can feel that.”
He nodded, already sensing an invisible string from his own chest to the eggling.
“And the fact you see nothing yet regarding your bond does not help,” she continued. “How often can you return?”
“Once a week at the most. When I come, I would most likely bring some friends. Two elves and two dwarves.”
A row of sharp, white teeth appeared as Aerthen smiled, tapping her fingers for a moment on the scales of her appendage.
“Oh, they sound like fun. Do they like to be scared?”
Laughing, he shook his head.
“Perhaps we can just scare the male dwarf. The rest are ones I actually try to not upset. As women, they tend to make me suffer when I have done so.”
Her warm laugh filled the cavern, and Max just grinned.
Once more he stared at the notification that neither Bob nor Aerthen could tell him much about.
[Bond]
*****
You are bonded with the young eggling Rakonath. In time as the bond grows and he matures, more information will be available. Know that Wekime is watching.
*****
Nothing like knowing a god has their eyes on you and a hand in all this.
Something tells me we are in for a surprise the next time we meet him.
“So, when will you leave?” Aerthen asked.
“I need to go now. While I’ve made great time, I have been traveling for over four days and have not slept in probably five. Even though the exhaustion is there, I can withstand it, but I must return to my friends. There is another threat I must deal with, and I plan to return as quickly as possible within that week and bring him some freshly killed animals. Do you need anything when I return?”
Shaking her head, Aerthen snorted.
“No… You, Max Hoste, have given me more excitement on this single day than I have seen in hundreds of years. Do not worry about Rakonath. I shall watch over him and care for him. Just return soon. I’m certain he will miss you greatly.”
Bending over, he began gently tapping between both eyes on the sleeping eggling’s skull, slowly increasing the pressure until his eyelids drifted up slowly, those silver eyes looking glossed over.
Tired… want sleep.
“I need to go. I’ll be back. Aerthen will take care of you, and when I return, I will bring you some food.”
Fine…
No emotion came through the bond, simply a layer of exhaustion as his plump belly shifted as the dragon did, uncoiling its tail from his legs.
“Thank you for watching him,” Max said as he stood, moving carefully till he was away from the sleeping dragon.
“On my life, know that he will be protected. Be safe, Marked One.”
//LINKS

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/102061/dao-of-healing;

[L2] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/102061/dao-of-healing/chapter/1985731/chapter-1

[L3]

24 Chapter 353 - A Vault to Explore https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2058833/chapter-353-a-vault-to-explore;[2025-02-11 13:32]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 353 - A Vault to Explore

Max's limits of his traveling skill weren't too difficult to manage, simply choosing to appear south of town a bit out and using his new way of flying to get back to the capital.

Crashing into the courtyard near the training grounds caused a bit of a stir and some initial panic, but once everyone realized who had just appeared, trainers and Faction members streamed toward him.

"Seth Pendal!"

The voice that came out from over the rest was from a woman he recognized, seeing the larger-than-average fighter waving at him.

"Sulenda!" he shouted back, moving toward her as those who had already gathered around him parted. "You look to be doing well."

The brown-haired and muscular woman bobbed her head in a nod. Stopping just a few feet from him, she threw up a flex, her tanned arms on display as she only wore some leather pants and a shirtless jerkin.

"I'm just trying to get used to moving again. While I don't have any lasting problems in my head," she said, tapping her skull, "I sometimes feel like what I want to do and how I want to react aren't perfect. Tom says I will be fine, and so has me helping to train all these new recruits."

Her hand swept out over many of the ones near them, making it obvious that her seven-foot-plus frame was not the usual size most people could enjoy.

"Sounds like a good thing. How is Mustuck?"

"Oh, that dwarf is already in the tower again, helping out groups. He's been gone a week or two I think, so he should return soon. I…" Sulenda paused, frowning, and glanced around at everyone gathered. "I never thanked you properly for saving me. Thank you."

Shrugging, Max just gave the grin he often did.

"Thank me by making the next generation of Faction members to be the best they can be. That's all I need."

Nodding, she whistled, and a groan came from everyone gathered.

"You heard our favorite hero. Everyone back to the training grounds. I need to repay a debt!"

Some chuckles came from a few as the thirty-plus people all jogged back to where they had been before he had arrived.

Waving, he moved toward the entrance of the Faction house, ready to see everyone and get a good night's sleep.

***

The silence seemed to last well over a minute as everyone sat slack-jawed, staring at Max, who yawned, fingers intertwined behind his head.

"A dragon… for a pet," Tom muttered.

"It's not a pet," Max replied. "It's not like that. He is smart… not like Aerthen was, but she said in time he will get smarter. I mean, at only a minute or two old, he was able to speak words."

Snorting, the Faction's main trainer shook his head, rubbing his eyes for a bit.

“I send him off to find a dragon to take care of the egg, and he comes back telling me it’s bonded with him,” Tanila teased. “No more solo trips of any kind lest you come back bonded with some beastkin or something.”
A snort escaped from their healer.
“She’s not lying, Max. You can’t do anything normal, can you?”
“Nothing he’s ever done has been normal,” Fowl interjected. “I mean… he can solo the tower for a while… tell me how that’s normal!”
A few mutters and grunts came, but no one else wanted to talk until Everett leaned forward and shrugged.
“I guess… I’ll just add it to one of the hundred things you have said that always makes me wonder what could possibly happen next. Still, I’m glad you managed to find a dragon and didn’t have to kill any. From what I know, there aren’t that many left.”
Their dwarf warrior grunted as he crossed his arms and wiggled a little deeper into the couch.
“Dragons… bah, those things are dangerous. Forgive me, but my kind aren’t fond of them. Best not to tell the king you are bonded to one. He won’t like that.”
“Still, the day he shows up riding a dragon, I’m going to retire,” Tom said. “As it is, I feel like I can do a little less if Sulenda keeps doing what she’s doing.”
Giving his trainer a side glance, Max frowned.
“That’s a weird comment… Are you seriously considering retiring?”
Everett coughed, and Max saw that even the Faction leader was frowning at his friend.
“He isn’t… I just have a different job for him, and it’s more personal for you. He’ll be working on getting your sister going with a group and creating a special team. That means he is in talks with many factions as well as some of the noble houses to see which children might be worthy of joining with your sister.”
Max could feel everyone sitting up a little straighter as Everett spoke, his Sonar skill reading the room and each person’s shifting.
Looking at his friends, he could see their heads bobbing, and even Tanila smiled slightly.
“Everyone knows about this already but me?”
“Well, you were gone,” Tom replied. “And your sister was a bit overwhelmed by your reputation. Your parents are actively looking at some properties in town and outside the walls. Even our crafters have offered to help your mother progress and get her set up with a shop.”
For the second time today, the stress that had been weighing him down vanished, and he was relieved to hear that his family was finding a place like he hoped.
“I… I don’t know what to say… thank you?”
Laughter came from Everett and Tom as both men shook their heads.
“No, Max. This is our pleasure,” the Faction leader replied. “You and your team have done more than I can ever repay. Everyone on the board has agreed that anything you need is yours.”
He paused, leaning forward, his eyes twinkling slightly and a mischievous grin appearing.
“Even the reagents that were once unavailable.”
Max couldn’t stop the whistle that escaped his lips.
“Anything?”
“I’m pretty sure I didn’t stutter, did I, Tom?”
“No, Everett, you didn’t.”
Both men grinned, and Max sat up straight in his chair, scratching his bald head for a moment, grinning like a fool.
“And if I said I really want to take a look at those items right now?”
“Then we can go,” the older man replied, standing up. “While I’m certain your friends and your lovely mage are wanting some alone time with you, I’m certain they will understand.”
Max glanced at Tanila, who nodded, holding out her hand toward him.

“I understand, but I’m not missing this moment at all,” she stated.
“Me either!” Fowl exclaimed, jumping to his feet.
Rolling his eyes, Everett motioned to the door.
“Fine, then all of you follow me. Tom, will you go and get Alfreda for me?”
The trainer nodded and moved quicker than the rest, getting to the door and slipping out as everyone else got to their feet.
“What kind of items are we talking about?” Cordellia asked as she fell in line next to Everett.
“Things most factions would lie about having and nothing anyone will talk about outside of that room. Trust me when I say this: It’s not a hoard of treasure like I think Fowl hopes it is, but the few pieces we own are beyond anything anyone in our Faction can work with right now. Well, perhaps besides Max, that is.”
Having heard their conversation, he chuckled and shrugged, glad to be able to intertwine his fingers with Tanila’s as they walked.
“I missed you,” he whispered.
“Yeah… I’m sure you did… which is why you smiled so much when discussing having a baby without me,” she teased, sticking her tongue out at him.
“At least the delivery was easy on you. Besides, he doesn’t look a thing like you at all.”
She groaned, hip-checking him as they moved toward the door.
***
Max watched as Alfreda’s hands trembled, inches away from opening the plain-looking wooden box that Everett had withdrawn from one of the shelves in the vault they were standing in.
He knew there was a special storage place inside the Faction house, but had never sensed it. Even now his Sonar skill couldn’t sense anything but the space they stood in.
Purple stone pulsed with a kind of power he had sensed on the other world and then absorbed it, creating an effect that made it invisible to his skill. His eyes could see them, but his skill didn’t recognize them.
Those stones. I think they actually prevent someone from teleporting into here. Am I wrong?
You are correct. When you touched one, I told you that it had properties similar to your skill, which blocks teleportation and travel near you. It is a shame Everett would not give more details about them.
Lost in conversation with Bob, Max was thankful for Tanila squeezing his hand as the older elf woman responsible for all the materials in the Faction touched the lid.
“I… I didn’t expect to do this for quite some time,” she whispered. “How long has it been?”
“Too long,” Everett replied as he stood beside her and the same stone counter that it was placed on in the middle of the vault.
Neither of them seemed to care about the other chests, bags, and barrels that lined the walls and shelves of the decently sized-room.
The wooden box let out a hum, and after a few seconds of the noise, she nodded at Everett, who placed his hand on the top of the chest.
A click came a second later, and then no more sound was heard from the wooden box.
The Faction leader looked up and saw how he was looking at him and smiled.
“Even if one gets in here, opening some of these chests requires certain people to do so. Trying to brute-force one open could have consequences no one would like.”
As he spoke, Alfreda opened the chest and reached inside.
We can use that!
Bob’s outburst came when Max saw the large white metal block. Like ivory yet easily the size of someone’s head, the metal block clinked when the older woman sat it down on the stone counter.
“May I?” Max asked, already moving closer to the counter, having let go of Tanila’s hand without realizing it.

“That good?” Everett asked as he nodded.
“That good,” he replied, mimicking the man.
It was his turn for his fingers to tremble, able to sense the power and strength inside the square.
“What is this? Where did it come from?”
“I believe it’s rumored to have come from the tower floors after the 60th level if the notes are correct. That is the only one we have, and no one could use it. To see you act like that makes me wonder what is possible with it.”
Max nodded, surprised at how warm the outer edge felt, and though it looked smooth, it had a feel to the edges that was almost textured, providing grip.
All of those ideas… from just this.
He bobbed his head, hearing his skill talk about what was now racing through his mind.
I could make a part for a gun… a different kind of gun. Or a hilt that could withstand almost anything. Perhaps even a place with a mage weapon. Able to hold multiple cores and essences. And then I don’t even know what all those other things really are. One like some kind of housing system for a power gem. Built to contain power and disperse it. Another is some kind of… transforming weapon like my staff was but different… more liquid, and this would serve as the place the power is stored again.
These are things we might hold off on creating just yet. Doing so might alert the system, and with the problems we are dealing with, having one more eye on us might not be a good thing right now.
Still moving his head up and down, Max turned the block over a few times, bringing it close to his ear and listening, almost as if there was a sound coming from it that he couldn’t quite hear but knew was there.
“So, Max,” Alfreda said as he sat the block back on the counter. “You look like a child who just got the toy they wanted for their birthday. Tell me, what could you do with this?”
Taking a deep breath, he moved his mouth, feeling the tightness in his jaw from how he had been grinning.
“By itself, nothing but with other items… probably things greater than anything else I have ever made before.”
A cough came from Fowl, who cleared his throat and pounded on his chest several times.
“You’re saying you can make something better than what you gave Dexic?! A weapon that literally has a skill?!”
Nodding slowly, he turned and smiled at his friend.
“Yes.”
“Hooooooooly elf tits,” their warrior said with a groan.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Perhaps you noticed the shoutout above!

i’m cowriting with another author and having a lot of fun with it. Give the series a follow and check it out! The story keeps getting better as it goes on!

Double Classer in the Multiverse[L2]

//LINKS

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/105360/double-classer-in-the-multiverse-a-litrpg-apocalypse;

[L2] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/105360/double-classer-in-the-multiverse-a-litrpg-apocalypse;

25 Chapter 354 - Secrets of the Tower https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2060754/chapter-354-secrets-of-the-tower;[2025-02-11 15:15]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 354 - Secrets of the Tower

As Alfreda put away the last item, Max couldn't ignore the scowl on Everett's face.
"You had two of those items… one of which has no record of where it came from."
His fingers tapped the jar of silver liquid he had taken from Igarra's collection, part of the crafting material that Buwingrid had shown him on that planet.
How this got here is a question I would be interested in also. Does that mean the tower can drop items from a system that ours isn't supposed to have? Like all those robotic ones?
Potentially. Though dropping those items isn't the problem. It's finding a use for them. There may be ways of to craft with them that none have knowledge of but that once someone did. If Everett is right, that item could be over three hundred years old.
"I think you're right, but after pondering that thought a bit, how many items do you have that adventurers have brought in over the years that no one can figure out a real use for?"
Scratching his gray hair, the Faction leader frowned.
"Many materials go into a scrap section, melted down or dismantled. Some things end up as basic crafting supplies if we can't find a real use for them. Eventually, we would have overflowed with stuff if everything someone brought back was kept. You wouldn't believe the number of adventurers who used to chop up trees, bringing them back and trying to sell them. It's not a bad business, but one doesn't get rich fast because eventually, the truth is most places don't have the ability to craft with those materials."
He paused, his eyes moving side to side, and Max knew what he was doing.
Soon a book appeared, and the older man laid it on the stone counter.
As he flipped through it, Fowl coughed and motioned to the container Max was still tapping.
"So, that's some secret dwarf crafting material on another world, but you're not sure how to use it yet?"
"Like I mentioned before, there are most likely an unlimited number of ways to craft things, depending on the system for each world. It's like my magic."
Max summoned a small stone rock about the size of his head with his Elemental Mastery skill. Setting it down on the counter, he used his Stone Mastery skill.
It began to rise, spinning as he desired, and then split into hundreds of smaller pieces, each maintaining the spherical orbit before he forged them back into one solid piece.
"Tanila can't do this," he stated before dismissing the rock, and it vanished.
"What in the gods was that?!"
Alfreda's sudden outburst reminded Max that not everyone knew the extent of his skills. He knew his face was turning red as warmth flooded his cheeks.

“You can cast magic too?!” she asked, slamming the lid to the wooden chest with a bang.
“I can… though it’s more of a secret to many.”
“How? I mean—”
Max saw how quickly she stopped talking and then where her gaze was and could sense Tanila shaking her head.
“Forgive me. It’s not my business to pry. You just startled me with that display of power.”
“I’m the one who forgot you don’t know of some of my abilities. Still, I’d prefer it if no one learned about it from you.”
With her fingers, the older elf motioned that her lips were sealed.
“And this leather?” Cordellia asked, holding out the four yards of rolled-up red leather he had produced that matched what was in the chest. “What does this come from? It feels amazing to my fingers. It bends well, and yet I couldn’t poke a hole in it with my harvesting knife.”
Everett shrugged, and Max joined him in mimicking his response.
“I’m not certain. The perk of killing someone who wants you dead is you get their stuff. Unfortunately, that doesn’t mean I know where it came from.”
“Which goes back to the tower being similar across different worlds or connected in some way,” Tanila said. “There are books I wish I had access to in my… capital that would probably talk about this.”
“Yes, dear, but those wouldn’t be something we could access, most likely kept in the royal library.”
A chuckle came from Cordellia, who grinned at Alfreda’s comment.
“That is true. I should have thought of that,” Tanila replied.
Shrugging, the older elf picked up the box and began taking it to its place on the vault wall.
“So with two or three other items, I think I can make some legendary weapons that will change our minds on what is possible. Still I’m a little upset you won’t let me have that Fire-Forged Bar,” Max said as he watched the Faction leader tap his finger on a line in the book. “What did you find?”
It was obvious Everett wasn’t going to deal with Max’s request again for the special bar that Fowl had already drooled over.
“This isn’t my book but the leader before me. What you said triggered a memory, and she wrote that our Faction had discussed this very topic with a few other ones. Read this.”
Max took the book that was slid toward him and saw the passage Everett was talking about.
***
… The Emerald Knights have shown great knowledge of a mystery that has plagued my thoughts for a while. Their leader admitted that there is a record in the vaults which points that tower floors above the 60th are considered beacons to another world. Some reported that those who travel there occasionally find creatures that are sapient and can converse. Not all are beings that desire to simply kill the climber. Those floors are considered rare, but it raises the question of why those later floors might be like this.
Only once in our Faction’s history was there any mention of a time when our greatest climber, Selkie, a myth to many, reached the 77th floor and said that his party found only one creature on it. They traded items, and upon that task, the portal appeared, allowing them to leave.
While I doubted that, like most people, now the question I face is, could this be true? Why would the tower change? What lies beyond those higher floors?
***
Frowning, Max slid the book to the right, letting Tanila have a turn before the rest would get a chance.
“So… that tiny painting in the hall of honor… that’s all this Selkie has to be remembered by?”

“That’s what you got out of this?” Everett asked, shaking his head. “Don’t blame me. I don’t handle those items. There might be more, but like yourself, most people who climb that high don’t want that kind of attention or fame. Besides… how he died was… bad.”
Max winced, his mind already doing some math on just how powerful the creatures that high up in the tower might be and how hard it might be to fight them with normal stats and skills.
The system… I believe it is preparing those who are able to finish the tower. Opening their minds to what is out there. The possibility that life as you know it is not that special.
Not that special? I mean, I know we’re not much compared to what I faced on the other planet, but really?
What makes you think you’re special beyond me? Could you obtain the power you have now without it? Is there any chance you might have become strong enough to reach the 50th floor in your entire lifespan? What about your sister? Without my help she would not have the skills nor the power she possesses. Tanila isn’t special outside of her blood and the bonus that grants. Imagine if she had me. Your friends are… only special because of their journey with you through the tower.
He was frowning and didn’t care. The knowledge of what Bob was saying caused a sore he had picked at a few times already to itch. Every part of his mind searched for answers, and the tiniest thing he had heard or read came together, trying to solve a problem that was right before him.
So if one does beat the tower, they will understand potential options or paths. But since Igarra defeated the tower and was still able to be killed by us, that means just completing that task doesn’t grant safety.
A howl of laughter reverberated in his mind.
Max… think! I have warned you constantly that there is never a time when anyone is truly safe. Even the gods who are the oldest realize this, and that is why they have bound themselves to rules. Rules which help them to stay safe while enjoying the power they have. They can play games, affect others, all while limiting their exposure to their existence being snuffed out. It is why… I think myself and the other two black skills are allowed.
Simply toys to play with or pieces to affect. Nothing more than a game between gods…
Yes.
There was a hint of frustration in Bob’s reply, and Max felt his stomach turn bitter at that truth again.
Someone is simply playing a game, using our lives as nothing more than a way to entertain themselves or weaken someone else.
“Max?”
Like a moth to a flame, he turned to see Tanila studying him.
“You okay?”
Nodding slowly, he put on a smile.
“I am… just… considering some things I have learned in the last few months and am not very excited at what that might mean.”
“Which is?” Batrire asked as she watched Fowl push the book back to Everett.
“The tower is putting sapient beings, like ourselves, in the tower at later floors. It might… well, I’m not certain about the earlier floors, but for whatever reason, we may face beings just like us. The question I have is why risk that kind of power and strength? I mean, how many beings might be on a floor? What if we faced a group from another world, competing for the same thing, trying to climb the tower, and each of us are the foe they must face in order to progress?”
Fowl cleared his throat twice as he shook his head.
“So you’re saying we have to kill others or be killed?”
“It’s always been that way,” Max replied.

“You six are awfully gloomy,” Alfreda stated as she moved to stand next to Everett. “Not one of you is smiling, and the things you are saying are not something I want to have to consider. Does it matter? If you want to complete the tower, won’t you be like every other climber before you and do whatever it takes?”
“No,” Max replied. “I won’t simply kill just because someone thinks I should. I’m not getting strong just so I can murder another.”
“It’s not murder, it’s—”
A hand on her shoulder from her older friend silenced Alfreda.
“She is right. Let’s not let this topic take us down a path we don’t want to go. Get some rest, spend some time with your family. Tomorrow, we can go over the last details of what I’ve been able to get information-wise on that camp you believe you have found.”
Nodding, Max took Tanila’s hand in his and kissed it.
“I am all for a little rest and some time with those that I love.”
“Please, no PDA,” Cordellia said with a groan. “Listening to those two make animal noises most days is bad enough. I can’t take it if you two start that.”
Fowl barked twice and then let out a whine, causing everyone to laugh as Everett motioned toward the vault door, which was pulled shut.
“I think this is the perfect time to say goodbye,” their leader said. “I’ll be free tomorrow. Welcome home, Max, and enjoy your time tonight.”
//LINKS

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/104975/the-ethersmith-runesmithing-progression-fantasy;

26 Chapter 355 - Perks of a Loving Family

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2062671/chapter-355-perks-of-a-loving-family;[2025-02-12 15:04]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link [L1]]

Chapter 355 - Perks of a Loving Family

“And then, Tom took me to a beginner dungeon and walked me through it!” exclaimed Stacy, her voice rising with each beat of the story she was obviously anxious to share. “This dungeon doesn’t have teams! Everything is level one, and there are guards and people like Tom who simply come in and give advice! I hit level three already! Three!”
Max smiled, watching his sister’s face almost radiate light from the joy she now appeared to have. Next to her was Callie, fast asleep in a tiny carrier.
Both of his parents looked like different people as they lounged on the couch in the suite Everett had given them.
Each had new clothes and a haircut, and his father sported a clean-shaven face. Smiles never left their lips, and those shadows that had almost consumed their eyes were gone, no longer looking like life was over.
“I tell you, these three abilities are incredible! I’ve had multiple people coming to watch me and Tom. The only thing making this worse is when they find out I’m your sister and want to offer me a place in their Faction.”

Chuckling, Max winked at his sister and ran his thumb along the top of Tanila's hand. He could sense her smile as her head rested against his shoulder as they lounged on one of the other small couches in the room.
"The price of fame is being desired," he replied. "Just take it slow. Trust Tom. I wish I had the chance to study under him more. He really knows what to do."
Sighing, Stacy nodded and snuggled down in the chair. Glancing at her daughter, she reached out and almost touched the sleeping child's head but stopped at the last moment.
"Part of me feels guilty for being so excited about this. I mean… she spent the whole day with the sitter Everett hired for us. Am I a bad mother for wanting to do this?"
Max shrugged.
"I'm not able to answer that, but I think if you want to be an adventurer, you know that staying home will only make you feel like you did when Caleb didn't return. You might even resent her being born."
He felt a pinch to his leg but ignored Tanila's action.
A slight scowl appeared on his sister's face, and even his parents stiffened at his old friend's name.
"That's not fair," she protested, glaring at him.
"Is it? Tell me you wouldn't eventually feel that way, knowing the skills you have, feeling trapped and unable to use them to become what you believe you can be. Would you eventually blame Callie for forcing you to stay home? Would you hold that against her and potentially drive a wedge in your relationship because she reminded you of him and what you once again felt was taken from you?"
"Max, you can't say those things," his father argued. "I've never blamed you for what happened to our family. Why would your sister do—"
"He's right, dear."
The almost quiet voice of his mother silenced his dad. Max watched as he turned to see a few tears rolling down the cheeks of the woman who had given birth to him, her chest heaving a few times.
"I… I blamed Max so many times for what we experienced. It made me angry. Then I felt worse, blaming him for something he couldn't control. I… I needed to know why he was unskilled! Surely he worked hard enough to get the baking skill at least! Then I blamed the gods before I blamed him again. Until that day he showed up… there was a lot of resentment in my heart."
His dad's mouth moved, but no words came. Instead, he simply pulled his wife close and began to hold her, kissing her head as she cried silently for a moment.
Letting them have that, Max turned to see his sister's expression had changed. Her eyes were drawn tight, and a grimace had replaced the scowl.
"The truth hurts, doesn't it?"
She nodded, looking again at her sleeping daughter.
"I… how… how could you know?"
Laughter escaped his lips, and Max quickly clamped down on them, seeing Callie stir slightly from how loud he had been.
"This last year was hard. Many times I wanted to blame everyone, gods included, for what had happened to me. And then I realized the truth after meeting Tanila and telling her how I felt."
He turned slightly, taking the hand of the elf he loved and kissing it.
"I finally realized that if I had stayed home and been just a Baker, I would have never met her. Everything I once thought I knew about love was nothing compared to how I felt about her. I know regret, I know anger, and I know remorse. That is why I could see it all over Mom the moment she saw me. Joy mixed with pain and covered in the truth that all those moments she blamed me were potentially valid.
"Even now I see it on you, just beginning to take root. You feel guilty and yet can't wait to go adventuring. That is because you haven't learned how to be both a mother and an adventurer. Give it time. Take it slow. Be safe, and do what Tom tells you to. That way, you can come home and be the amazing mother I know you'll be."
Stacy slowly nodded, her pained expression beginning to melt away.

“When did you get to be so smart?” she asked.
Laughing, Max tapped his head.
“I have more intelligence than most warriors.”
Tanila gasped for air after, laughing so hard it woke up Callie, but no one seemed to care as everyone had joined in the laughter.
***
“You’re very fortunate, you know that,” Tanila said as she ran her finger along his chiseled abs.
“Are we talking about what I just experienced or?”
Poking him, she groaned and rolled onto her back, freeing herself from the arm he tried to pull her back with.
“Don’t get cocky. While that was nice, I’m talking about your family. Growing up in what I had… I know a family that loves each other and can see it all over each of you. Their personalities and actions have drastically changed since I first met them. You have done what you always do. Bring life to those who have lost it. Just like you did with me.”
Max was on his side, watching her as she spoke, and before she finished talking, Tanila had turned her head and reached up, stroking his cheek with her fingers.
“I’m certain you were alive when I ran into you. The three of you had a great thing going before I arrived.”
A groan escaped her lips, and she gave his chin a gentle shove.
“Our definition of a good thing is different. Only because we were at the lower dungeons, and the three of us were clearly beyond those things we faced did most of the fights work out. Still, we needed you just as much as you needed us. Your family needed you even more. Just the spark of life you provided brought them back from the life many wouldn’t even call really living.”
“So what’s your thoughts on my sister then? Am I wrong for pushing her to be an adventurer?”
His question caused her to reach out with her hand and gently rub her bare stomach.
“I’m not certain I can answer that… you know her better. Besides, everything you told me about her pointed to one dream. She wanted to be the warrior you are. To give that up… or to be forced to do so…” Tanila paused and grimaced slightly. “It’s like you losing the dream of being a Baker. All your life you wanted something, and when it was taken away, you had to find a new way to live. Was it easy? Obviously not, but as you said before, you wouldn’t trade the life you have now for the life you once thought you might have.”
Blowing a raspberry at her, Max leaned forward and kissed her for a few seconds.
“How did I ever get so lucky to find you?”
She shook her head and winked.
“No, the real question is what did I do so wrong to get stuck with you.”
By the time they settled down and fell asleep, Max was grateful the walls of their room blocked all sounds.
***
“So how can a section of a mountain be like that?” Fowl asked. “I mean, based on the three maps you showed us, the section that all the men marked is shown to be nothing but worthless trees and rocks. Can it be that big that no map has details on it?”
Frowning, Everett nodded and then pointed at the hand-sketched one he had shown last.
“I cannot express to you the problems getting that map caused. I even had to drop *Seth’s* name as to why I was even searching that area. Whatever is out there has evaded the notice of a few I casually asked and the ones I came right out and inquired from. Only one person was willing to direct me to the area where I could find some information.”
“Who was that person?” Max asked.
“Macy… she almost didn’t manage to get it out. Every time she tried to talk about it, her throat started to constrict. Finally she was able to direct me to the room where I

found the map I copied. I did convince her that you were going to come and ask in person if she knew something and didn't share."
Their healer let out a huff, and Cordellia mimicked her, both women frowning.
"I still can't believe your queens allow you to control them like that. Then again, I guess they both realize that you won't go away anymore."
Max grinned at their ranger as he finished his sketch of the map Everett had made.
"Neither of them liked that I knew they had ordered my death," he stated as he rolled up the parchment and stored it. "Still, I would rather have them in power and not have to worry about someone else taking that position. I've already got enough problems to worry about in one world that I'm not at and wondering what could be going on there. Eventually…"
His eyes found Tanila's watching him as he stopped talking for a moment.
"I'm going to have to return there. You four are going to come with me, and—"
"Can I come?!" Everett exclaimed, jumping up out of his chair. "I mean… I would love a chance to travel to a new world."
He is stronger than your friends in different ways. While you still would ultimately have to protect him, the truth is he would be a distraction. At the very least he would be someone else that might die before your friends.
That's not the best reason to bring him, Bob. Still… you're right. He is strong, and his knowledge would be useful. Besides, I'm certain he might be able to help acquire some things that would benefit the Faction. His knowledge alone would be helpful in choosing what to bring back.
"I've given it a little thought, and I would be fine with you coming, provided you agree to do whatever I say, whenever I say it. Is that a problem?"
"He's like a kid in a candy store with a gold coin," Tom said as he shook his head emphatically.
"I'll gladly do whatever you ask! Even if it's giving Fowl a bath," their Faction leader exclaimed.
"What?!"
Their dwarven warrior's outburst caused the room to erupt in laughter as his face turned red, shocked at the statement that had caught him off guard.
"It's a dirty job, and I'm tired of doing it," Batrire said between breaths.
Max couldn't help but smile, glad to see that everyone was able to enjoy a moment like this, knowing that whatever they found in the coming weeks could cause problems none of them were able to comprehend yet.
//LINKS

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/105291/devour-epic-fantasy-litrpg-coming-soon

27 Chapter 356 - Dungeon Diving with Stacy

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2064630/chapter-356-dungeon-diving-with-stacy;[2025-02-14 9:22]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link [L1], [L2]]

Chapter 356 - Dungeon Diving with Stacy
"Slow down! Focus on your footwork, trust the skill, don't overdo it!"

A single bob of her head was all Stacy gave him as he continued to shout orders, watching as his sister tackled the goblin dungeon by herself.
The plate armor that adorned her body had been crafted by him. It was good quality, with no bonuses, just something to protect her and keep her alive as she worked through this dungeon with him.
On the worked stone floor were two goblins, both missing their heads. Her skill with the sword she had right now quickly dealt with the last one in the pack.
Its rough dagger had no reach, and her strength and the two white skills she had gained made her virtually invulnerable to these things unless she lay down and let them kill her.
If she doesn't work on that technique, she's going to get her ass kicked when the real problems come.
You were the same way. Can you not remember running in headfirst, trying to brute-force your way through most fights until you learned better skills and tactics? Even now, if my memory serves me right, she appears better than you ever did.
The goblin's cry when Stacy took its hand off filled the hall. Torches set inside the walls flickered and cast moving shadows as she moved for the killing blow.
With the goblin focused on its missing appendage, her sword flicked through the air with precision and speed, adding its head to the other two as it bounced on the stone floor.
"That wasn't so bad. I mean, only one of them managed even a glancing blow."
"You're only safe because of that armor and your skills. Trust me, you don't want to depend upon them too much. In time you'll understand why I'm telling you the same thing Tom has said. There is more to fighting than just bashing your way through everything."
As she stored her sword, his sister groaned and began picking up the goblin heads. She frowned as she stuffed them in a sack and then stored them as well.
"No one talks about this… I mean, you warned me, but I still can't believe there are creatures I'll need to harvest testicles from."
"Oh, that's not even the worst of it," Max replied with a grin. "You're getting a crash course on the material gathering just because we can be in here together. I'm not affecting your experience at all, am I?
She nodded, grinning as he saw her looking away a little bit, most likely checking her status.
"This gets intoxicating. Still… I wish I could spend the points how I want," she said.
"Tom says it's okay for one or two points, but I need to hold off for a bit, see what my team is made up of, and then go from there."
Bobbing his head, Max motioned down the hallway.
"He's right, but we both know you'll be a tank. I'm working on a few things to help you with skills, but just know there is a reason why Fowl said what he did. If you go that route, you could be one of the best defense-based warriors. Sure, it's not all glamorous, and your ability to do a lot of damage isn't there, but it provides safety to the people you fight with. That alone is a reason to consider it."
He heard her sigh as she jogged from behind to walk beside him.
"That was never my dream… but then again, neither was having a brother who would outclass me and be some legend in all the land."
A punch from her did nothing, but Max still stepped to the side, winking at her as she rolled her eyes at him.
"It's not funny. You make all this look so easy."
"A year's worth of so many deaths," he replied. "Now then, watch what I do. See my footwork, and no, before you tell me I'm cheating. Trust me, I'm slowing myself down to match your speed. It's not easy, but you need to pay attention."
Stacy nodded and fell back a few steps, watching her brother move toward a pack of three goblins. One held a dagger ready, and the other two had a sword. None wore anything beyond a simple leather jerkin.
You're going to show off again.

No… I'm practicing this fighting skill. All those kicks and punches we have thrown had so much wasted energy and power. Just like the weapon skill, I can see the difference now. Footwork, hip movement, where I hold my hand, and the slight bend of my knees. It's like using a dagger, except without the dagger.
A cry came from the trio as Max moved into range, bent over slightly, feet set as he prepared for the rush like the last pack.
Both with the swords came in first, each running next to the other, ignoring the tactics they could implement if they surrounded him first.
Low level monsters… so stupid.
The one on his right swung as the one on his left thrust.
It was hard to ignore the weapon skill that told him exactly where everything was going to end up. Max had to fight to keep himself moving at the speed his sister had.
Only inches separated him and the weapon that wouldn't hurt even if they did connect, but his footwork showed the importance of balance and placement.
Dodging to the left, he was able to mitigate the right one's swing, using the momentum of the left one and delivering a quick punch as the sword slid past his side.
Like a magnet, his fist was drawn to its unprotected jaw, striking it with just enough power to send it stumbling sideways into its ally, entangling the pair.
Behind it the goblin with the dagger came, thrusting and slashing, its pitted weapon moving at a snail's pace in his mind.
This almost reminds me of those elves in the alleyway. How slow they seemed to move when you took control.
A chuckle filled his head as Max slapped the hand holding the dagger away, darting forward and delivering an uppercut to the goblin's chin, lifting it up off its feet and sending it crashing to the ground a few steps from where it had been.
Like a dancer, he glided around the hallway, dodging and weaving, deflecting and occasionally landing a strike, until finally, all three goblins were unconscious on the stone floor.
"Finish them, and then harvest their heads. The next group is yours."
"You're such a show-off," she teased, moving quickly and relieving the goblins of their heads.
"True, but I'm your older brother, and it's my job to show off."
Both of them were laughing as they moved deeper into the dungeon, a rare sound, Max thought as he found himself smiling again.
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"Can you stop moving your leg? The whole carriage is shaking."
Fowl grunted and put his hand on his knee, stilling the offending appendage that had caused Cordellia to complain again.
"Sorry… just… All I can think about right now is when we'll get to Nalgrun and see my family. After watching Max and his reunion work out… I hope my return might go just as well."
Batrire squeezed his arm as she leaned her head against his shoulder.
"Don't worry, my love. I have no doubt the whole city, our king included, will want to meet you."
"She's right," Max added. "You're a tower climber who has made it to the 51st floor! Not many can say that."
"Bah… we all know it's due to you. I mean, sure, I've saved everyone's arses here a few times, but I don't want to steal your thunder."
Some chuckles came, and the mood that had been turning somber for a moment appeared to turn positive.
"I guess you should be more worried about the bill for the wedding," Tanila teased. "Have you seen the stuff on the list?"
Jerking himself free from their healer's grasp, Fowl stared at the dwarf he was going to marry, eyes wide.
"You have a list? And you showed it to her? I thought we agreed I would have some say!"

Groaning, Batrire rolled her eyes.
“Please… I said you could have some say. The only say you get is *yes* when the priest asks if you’ll marry me.”
Max felt Tanila pull closer to him as she chuckled, her smile present to his Sonar as he watched his dwarven friend start to pretend to pout.
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“That doesn’t make sense, though,” Cordellia said as she poked at the bowl of stew in her hand. “We ran into other parties while Dexic took us through the tower. Yet when we had you in our group, only twice or maybe three times do I recall us ever running into other climbers.”
“All I know is that for some reason, the tower reacts differently to me than everyone else,” Max repeated. “When I returned back from the place I had been held captive, I raced through every tower floor. The only thing I could focus on was getting to Tanila. Not once did I see another party. Yet… when I entered the floor you were on, why I suddenly could find you didn’t make sense. For whatever reason, the tower allowed us to engage with other groups those few times.”
Their ranger frowned, her spoon still playing with the food they were eating for dinner.
Shifting on the chair he was sitting in, Max pushed his bowl away on the wooden table before him.
Fowl had never turned in the table and chairs he had *borrowed* , and right now it was nice to sit down around a table, even if they were pulled off to the side of the road for the night.
Should I tell her what you think?
No… I’m not certain, but part of me believes the system is involved now. All three skills holders will be treated differently. Whoever or whatever we face when the time comes… they will potentially be just as strong as us.
A pop from the nearby fire sent some sparks upward, and the scent of burning wood was noticeable in the light breeze that ran across the small clearing.
“No one knows or says or possibly can even say what lies beyond,” Max stated, feeling everyone’s gaze on him. “The tower I was in on the other world was locked to a single floor, and the next one was decided after. How was that possible? I have no idea, except that Igarra was the tower’s and potentially of the whole planet’s keeper. I don’t know if there are others of similar power on that world, and I cannot begin to imagine what it costs or takes for her to have exerted such will upon the entire world.”
Shifting in his chair, Max searched through his storage and found what he was looking for.
A small, yellow metal shard was in his hands, and after looking at it for a moment, he set it on the wooden tabletop.
“What’s that?” Fowl asked, leaning across the table to see better.
“It’s a skill shard from the world that I was trapped on. When I take you all there, I will let one of you see if you can absorb it.”
“A skill from another world?”
Max nodded at Cordellia, whose sudden outburst made him smile, her voice higher than usual.
“Yes. There are more like this one waiting over there. While I could let you try now, it would probably be better if I didn’t, because the truth is, I’m not sure how our system would handle that here.”
“Because we’re not on that world?” Batrire asked
Tanila began bobbing her head before he could reply.
“I’m the one that told him to wait,” she said, drumming her fingers against the wood. “After he showed me that and told me what happened, I decided to hold off for a lot of reasons. One of them being this gift right here.”
Max couldn’t help but smile as she gently touched her stomach.
“Wait… you’re all askin’ the wrong questions!” Fowl protested. “Max just said we’re going to another world! Another goblin humpin’, ogre lovin’ world!

“Yes… but only after we finish one problem at a time. I still need to take all of you to meet Rakonath. But before we can do that, we need to figure out what is in this place that doesn’t appear on any maps.”

//Links

[L1 book_main_page] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/99737/splinter-angel

[L2 cover artist] https://msartsy.carrd.co/

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A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 357 - The Power to Hide a City
“I’m sorry, sir, but the road ends here. All that I can find is a clearing to camp the night in if we really want to, but honestly, I think we should press on and see if what you’re looking for is farther down the road.”
Max could see the way their driver, Blake, was shifting. His head constantly turned to look down the road and in the direction he wanted to go. His gray hair was cut short, the only measure of how old the man Everett charged with watching them was.
I can sense it, and it appears that only Tanila and Batrire can as well. Is there really a spell to make people want to move on?
That is the only conclusion I can think of. Look at the spot to *camp* . It’s nothing but a clearing not near big enough for more than one carriage or cart. It’s like it was purposely created to persuade someone from stopping yet a landmark for anyone who knows what they’re looking for.
Max nodded, even though he didn’t agree with the advice he had just been given.
“We’ll camp here tonight. Don’t worry. Just focus on setting up a few things, and we can decide what to do in the morning.”
“Are you certain, sir? I mean… we have at least three hours of light before it gets dark. Plenty of time to find another spot.”
Putting his hand on the driver’s shoulder, Max nodded.
“We’ll be fine.”
A pained look came over him, but after a few more seconds, Blake turned and began doing what he had been instructed, starting the process of leading the horses and the carriage into the area Max had pointed at.
“Why is it that my brain hurts?” Fowl asked, squinting from an obvious pain.
“Your item went off, a sure sign that you resisted the attempt to persuade you to leave like Blake wants,” Max replied. “That’s why I had you here with me. To see how he acted.”
Grumbling, their dwarven warrior blinked a few times before looking at Max.
“What or who are we messing with that can create something so strange like this?”
“I’m not sure, but hopefully we’ll find out soon enough.”

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“You should be the one doing the tracking,” Cordellia whispered as the five of them moved along an old trail that she had spotted. Once they moved north past the area, the carriage would stay tonight. “This trail looks old to my eyes at first glance, as if it hasn’t been used in ages, but when I get down and inspect the actual dirt, I can see the wear. Whatever magic is on this… it’s strong.”
“Still, it’s wide enough for a cart or carriage to easily move through it. The hardest part would have been just getting through the slightly larger pair of trees that looked like it would be too small.”
She nodded and bent down again, cursing under her breath as she ran a finger along the packed soil.
“I’m not excited about this at all, Max. What in the gods are we getting into?”
Sighing at hearing that question again, he shrugged.
“If I knew that, I would feel a whole lot better. Whatever it is, though, we’re about to find out.”
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Hidden in the treeline that ended after a few miles, Max and the others gazed across the farmland that surrounded a town that appeared to have a stone wall.
“Two miles… maybe a little more or less. Still, that’s a lot of farming and a decent amount of livestock if my eyes are right,” he said. “Based on how this is growing, I think the land is probably magically enhanced, and that means they could support at least a small town of a hundred.”
“But why have such large walls?” Batrire asked. “There were no animal tracks. In fact the forest was almost too quiet. Like all the game has been driven away, just like we were.”
“Someone has spent a lot of gold and energy to create this place,” Tanila declared as she held out her hand a few inches from the soil. “I can feel the amount of magic inside it. To know that they have done this is… impressive and scary.”
“We can’t approach without being seen,” their ranger pointed out. “The walls are tall enough, and I can make out what is most likely a guard tower. Based on everything we’ve found, I’m guessing they are manned day and night.”
“So… how are we going to get in?” Fowl asked.
“You’re not,” Max answered as he fought back the sensation of concern coming from Bob. “I’ll scout it out tonight and then see what I can find. After that I’ll return and we can decide how to approach.”
“What? You’re going in alone?”
“He’s the only one, my love,” Batrire said. “Think about it. We can’t get inside. Even at night there is no telling what might be out there, waiting for one of us to walk over and alert everyone or even hurt us.”
Motioning to the trees behind them, Max led his friends deeper into the shadows of the trees.
“Listen. I’m not sure what I’m going to find, and I need each of you to promise me that you’ll stay here. No matter what.”
His gaze fell on Tanila, who glared back for a moment before finally giving him a single nod.
“You’re not going to be stupid, are you?” Fowl asked.
“He’s a warrior. Of course, he’s going to be stupid,” their ranger replied with a grin. “I’m just glad to know if anyone can be and get away with it, Max can.”
Rolling his eyes, all he could do was consider what was going to happen in the next few hours after the sun went down completely.
You’ve been awfully quiet lately. I can sense your trepidation. What’s up?
I don’t know how to describe what I feel. Something is… different here. Like when we were on the other world, the way in which the system interacted with you. I can engage with it when you gain skills or stats. The amount of time varies, and the concept of speed isn’t one you can truly fathom yet. When we were in the system together, I know it seemed like forever, but as I told you before, it was barely a second.

Max tapped his temple to let everyone know why he hadn't responded yet.
Still, it seems weird that something could be here like this. Wouldn't Phaius know about it? Doesn't that make him the monster we thought he was?
No… remember you are a monster to most. Does that mean because most feel you are one, you must be? Is it then fair for everyone to hunt you and try to kill you? We always come back to this same line of questions and answers. Just because one animal believes it is okay to kill and eat their offspring does not mean it is right. Whatever is happening in this area, someone has a reason for it. While you might not agree with the reason, the question is more about its purpose. You need to figure out why so much has been done to cull those like yourself and your sister.
He couldn't help but frown at Bob, mentioning the danger his sister would have been in had he not been there.
"Sorry… a lot to discuss," Max said slowly. "This area feels different, kind of similar to the world I was trapped on."
"Different, how?" Tanila asked as she cocked an eyebrow.
"I'm not certain, and neither is he. Just that the system doesn't feel how it normally does, compared to everywhere else we have been."
She huffed, and Max studied the others who all had a frown on their faces.
"Just tell me we're not going to die," Fowl said. "I want to get married first and then know Batrire did it."
Unable to help himself, laughter came from his mouth as his dwarven friend grinned and winked at him.
"Loosen up, Max. You don't have to do this alone. We're here."
Nodding, he gave his brother-in-arms a gentle pat on the shoulder and then pointed at a small section in the trees.
"I'm going to take a nap if no one minds. Can someone wake me up when it's dark?"
"You four go ahead and rest," Cordellia said as she moved back toward the treeline. "I'll keep watch. Just make sure Fowl doesn't give our position away with his snoring."
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"Be safe," Tanila whispered as he kissed her on the cheek. "You don't want me coming in there to rescue you."
Even though it was almost pitch-black in the shadow of the trees, Max stroked her lips with his thumb and smiled.
"I'd almost let myself get caught just to watch you in action. Your gold hair shimmering in the night. That's something every man wants to see coming to save them."
Groaning, she gave him a playful shove and said nothing else as he turned, moving to the edge of the trees.
He took a deep breath, seeing the tiny lights that were barely visible on the walls.
Are you ready? I feel some conflict inside you.
It's just nerves. There is no way to know what is inside, and that part almost scares me. With how long this has been going on… Forget it. Let's go.
Bob didn't wait as Max moved, a spear made of air appearing before him. All it took was a small jump, and soon he was moving through the night sky. Like an arrow aimed at a target, he flew toward the town no one seemed to know anything about. Every second took him higher into the sky, and now that the wall was no longer blocking the view from above, the dim lights in the town below were visible.
A cold wind rushed against his bare skin, but Max ignored it like all the other times he traveled this way. It was nothing compared to the cold he had experienced in so many fights.
It looks much bigger from up here. I'm impressed at how symmetrical the city is.
Bob's acknowledgment came through their connection. The city looked like a wheel, with perfectly lined streets leading to a circular building in the middle.

I think we could conclude that is the place we need to head to. It would appear that even now the walls have more guards than we would have assumed.
Counting from what he could make out, the idea that there were at least thirty guards stationed around the walls made a small knot in his stomach grow.
That many? Do you think they know about Terrance and the others? About me?
Surely they should have returned by now. Perhaps if you didn't have to take that egg to the south and find it a home we might have surprised them, but it does appear that someone knows things aren't right. Why else would there be that many on the walls?
Each street had lights that illuminated it enough to mark the edge of buildings, and the occasional person could be seen traveling on one of them.
Let's descend slowly. I don't want to make as much noise or impact as we did last time.
That was your choice. Still a wise plan. I can sense that beyond that, you're not really certain about what we will do once we land.
I'm just making this up as I go. You know that.
The tiniest thread of amusement felt like a chuckle in his mind, and then Bob went silent. They began to descend quickly, falling like an arrow that had reached its zenith in the sky.
Instead of heading to the building in the center, Max's aim was one just across the street, unsure what traps or other nasty surprises could be awaiting them.
About fifty yards from the roof he was aimed at, Bob created an air spear that Max grabbed onto, the momentum slowing him as the spell caught his speed, falling under his weight and slowing down as mana poured into it, directing it in a way he hadn't ever known was possible until Bob began to show him new things he could do.
Like a feather, the last few feet came, and without making a sound, his boots touched down on the stone roof.
Stone out here… I wasn't sure but…
Max stopped his thought, holding his hand close to the building's roof.
There is magic infused in this. You can feel it, can't you?
If you can, then I can… Still, it would appear they are building a city designed to evade notice and potentially withstand something. The question again is what?
Frowning, Max looked over the edge across the street.
The worked blocks were laid perfectly in a circular design, matching the one he almost recognized from the tower and the werewolf floor. Each appeared to have no gap between them, his Sonar reading the area around him.
Two lamp posts were on opposite ends of the building on the street, a lightstone in each, illuminating just enough to cover the sidewalk and most of the road.
Across from him, he saw the building, its circular shape different from all the others, which were square.
Four stories… barred windows… and not a single guard out front. That doesn't seem bad at all.
If this adventuring thing doesn't work out, perhaps you can find someone with a jester skill and take it from them. Your jokes are getting as bad as your dwarven friends'.
//Links

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/105825/re-a-guide-to-demonic-ascension

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A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Magius shoutout

Chapter 358 - Alone or Together?

He was grateful that no one was near him as he lowered himself off the two-story building, making no noise upon touching down on the ground.

Stealth provided him with the security Max sought as he made his way across the worked stone road to the round building. Lightstones set within its stone walls cast a warm light around the base of it.

Not wanting to waste time, he circled the structure, surprised to find that it was at least one hundred yards wide and only had one entrance. A large metal door rested at the top of the stairs, flanked by a few columns and a porch, illuminated just a little bit more as the stones near the entrance were brighter than the rest.

I'm not sure going that way would be our best option.

No traps have been detected, though. It does seem strange that no one guards the door, but then again, if they expect to spot or catch anyone trying to enter at the wall, it would be overkill to have guards posted here.

Seeing his timer show only ten seconds left on Stealth, Max looked up at the round building rising into the night sky. The barred windows were evenly spaced, and only one near the top had a light still on.

This stone. I could try to use my skill on it.

Perhaps, but you can feel the difference between them. There is a current of magic in all this. Once again, I will tell you that what I detect from the system here is different from what is seen outside these walls. Something is happening here that doesn't make sense.

His speed made moving up the stairs, even in Stealth, take no time at all. Standing before the door, Max saw a large lock attached through a metal ring thicker than two of his fingers. The bolted-on ring was attached to the stone wall, large screws putting it firmly in place.

Still no traps, so here goes nothing.

Ignoring Bob's sensation, Max used his Stone Mastery skill to free the blocks holding the large metal ring to which the door was secured. With a gentle pull, he waited to see what noise might come as he started to swing the door open.

The hinges that fastened the door on the inside made no noise, and they were obviously well cared for and treated by how easily it moved. The ten-foot door opened into a hallway with only four small light sources giving off light farther inside.

Deftly, Max moved into the open door, pulling it closed as quietly as possible and then used his skill to secure the stone bricks once more in place.

I do not like this… something is off.

Through their bond, Max could sense Bob almost shudder, his skill reacting to whatever was around them.

A slight sensation of magic and power was there, moving through the floor and walls, yet he couldn't tell what it was other than that it was present.

Not wanting to stand there any longer, he began moving down the hallway, noticing that the stones on the inside were an exact copy of the tan ones outside.

Everything uses the same stone. The road was just like these, but only a bit smaller. Do you think—

A noise came from down the hallway and to the right, and Max activated Stealth again, moving closer to the center, where the hallway made an *X*. Passing two sets of doors, he could hear the sound of boots against the floor. Standing near the intersection, totally hidden, he saw a figure emerge from the right, continuing toward the path she was headed.
His stomach tightened as Max recognized the figure before him.
Her build was the same as it had always been. Etched in his mind was her face. Without realizing it, his heart beat a little faster, fists clenching as the woman drew near.
She cannot hurt you, and you know it.
Max simply nodded, watching the woman who had punched him on that frightful day, the day he had received Consume.
Her gait was one of unconcern, and she had a slight frown on her face as she plodded down the hallway. After reaching the first door on her left, she moved her hand over a panel, and it opened for her.
Gone was the woman whose name he hadn't even learned yet just as quickly as she had appeared. Her tanned skin, short bobbed brown hair, and unassuming stature hidden in a red robe vanished behind the door as it shut.
Taking a deep breath, Max slowly let it out.
I… I know she couldn't have hurt us but part of me—
Was frozen. Part of you wanted to kill her. I know. Maybe later. For now, we have another path to take. Go to the right from where she came. What we are looking for is down there. I can feel it drawing me… like a moth to a flame.
Needing only one more second to gather himself, he shook off the sensation that had infected him, a fear that seemed unreasonable, and yet it had been enough to make him freeze up.
Inside his mind he could sense the concern that was coming over from Bob as they moved down the path the woman had come, a tingling feeling in his head directing him where to go.
That door. On the left. You can feel it, too.
I can… only because it is causing you so much angst.
His hand moved, and for a moment Max wasn't sure if it was him or Bob moving, but it hovered so close to the metal panel near the door.
I will deal with this. Give me a moment.
Magic flowed through his hand, a sensation he couldn't help but feel in awe of sometimes as Bob did what he did. Even though they discussed sometimes how his skill could alter things through him and use his abilities, the knowledge that it possessed and was able to draw upon and still unable to share with him was a mystery.
I can tell you are in that same place you took me when messing with my sister's Choosing Day.
No response came, and Max just stood there, hidden from any who might appear, waiting for Bob to finish what he had started.
No click or other sound came, but the door began to slowly open without any fanfare.
That was harder than I expected. Whatever this place is, they have access to things I have not seen on this world. Tread carefully.
When their path forward was open enough, a light turned on inside, and Max saw a room that left him almost breathless.
Rows of stone slabs lined the room, his Sonar skill sweeping across the new open area.
Dozens of them were packed inside, only a few feet between each, just enough for one or two people to stand side by side.
On top of four of them were corpses.
Like someone had drained all the life from them, tight skin clung to bones, creating a display of death that looked pained, all four of the lifeless bodies with mouths open.
What is this place?

As he moved into the room, weaving his way toward one of the bodies, a cold chill appeared, now noticeable. When the door shut, Max couldn't help but wonder what they were getting into.

They are young… look at them. Bodies are not tall; they are all obviously human. I suspect we have found where those like yourself end up.

Standing over one of the corpses, each of them naked, stripped of clothing, he could see that before him was once a woman.

He couldn't help but wince, seeing the state of her body, scars marking part of her skin. His Sonar showed him what it took a moment for his eyes to find.

Those holes. Like a metal tube was stuck in them.

Yes. One in the artery in the neck and the other in the groin. They were drained. For now we need to move on. You can sense the direction we need to go.

Nodding once, Max spun on his heel and moved to the other end of the room, where a stone table was slightly different. Had his Sonar not been so good, he might have missed it, but Bob's sense of whatever it was they were searching for led him straight to it.

Underneath the lip of the table was a small hidden panel, and with his fingers almost touching it, Max could feel his skill once more doing what it did.

Like the door, it began to move, sliding along the stone floor, no sound coming as it revealed a set of stairs downward.

Dread like nothing he had ever experienced washed over him as warm air flowed upward, brushing against his skin.

It is down there. We need to decide. Are you going to do this alone or with your friends?

What do you recommend?

Bob said nothing for a few seconds, and Max stared down the stairway, seeing the light that washed over it from the bottom, a crystal softly pulsing and giving off light.

Neither of us knows what lies below. We are strong, and yet it would be foolish to believe we are the strongest on this world. Everett told you that he believes at least a dozen or more might be able to stand against us. While most would be in the royal families of the other races, we would be foolish to believe that such a place like this can exist without someone who possesses real power.

Which means it is a threat to my friends by bringing them here.

Correct. But tell me, Max. Are you going to do this alone? What if you did need help? Could you deal with the truth that by bringing them here, you might endanger them, unable to protect them? But what happens if we are caught in something and cannot accomplish this alone?

He knew he was frowning, but Bob's questions were causing him problems.

Behind him lay four people, all dead because of whatever had taken place here. Something was going on, and it was hidden from their own kingdom and possibly the world. He couldn't shake the feeling that had he not been rescued by his sister and Caleb, his own body would have been on one of those slabs.

So I risk those I love on the chance that I might need them or keep them where they are, wanting not to endanger them?

And face their anger at being left behind once more. Do not forget, at some point you must either leave them behind and do everything alone or trust that they will be strong enough to fight alongside you.

It felt like a dagger had been plunged into his heart, but Max knew Bob hadn't done it to be mean or evil. He had simply been told the truth.

Decide quickly, though. The longer we stand here, the greater the chance of someone coming and finding us. You already know the answer of what you must do. Now, you must admit it to yourself.

Swallowing felt difficult.

Emotions were fighting against each other, and seeing the mystery woman who had knocked him out a year ago made all this harder.

Glancing at the body of the woman he had looked at, a chill ran up his spine.
That could have been Stacy if we had not been there to stop them from taking her.
She would have been fine. She only has those skills because of what I did and the power I gave. But yes, had she been given those and you were not there… most likely your sister would be dead soon.
With his decision made, Max moved to the stone table that had slid across the floor to reveal the stairway beneath it. Bob did whatever he did, and it began to return to where it had originally been, hiding the descent into whatever lay below once more.
No more people get hurt if I can help it, but you're right… I can't keep doing everything by myself.
You're never alone, Max. I'm here. Listen carefully to what I say now. This path you are finally committing to means that death may come at some point to one of your friends. It also means that you won't walk it alone. Choosing between the two means a life of loneliness and pain. The other can have the same outcome and memories of a time worth living.
A twinge of pain washed through him as Max felt the same emotion from Bob that he had when forced to leave home and run.
Never again shall you be alone. I'm here as well.
They retraced their steps silently, and neither said another word as they headed back to where the others were waiting.

30 Chapter 359 - What Lies Beneath

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2070481/chapter-359-what-lies-beneath;[2025-02-17 15:45]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 359 - What Lies Beneath

Max watched as everyone sat in silence, hunkered down in their erected tent, creating a place to hide in the forest without fear of giving off light.
"You four don't have to come if you feel it's too dangerous."
"That's a load of goblin shite, and you know it," Fowl muttered. "What kind of friends would we be if you went in alone?"
"It's not about being bad friends," he protested. "It's about the potential danger that lies inside."
"And you're certain that the area isn't like our world?" Tanila asked as she drummed her fingers a few times on the table.
He nodded at her, studying how her face looked perfectly calm, even though he had sensed her heart beating faster as he told them what was inside.
"The truth is… part of me is scared for you all. Now, I wish I had gone down the stairs and done more reconnaissance, but at the time, I didn't want to do that and potentially encounter something and have you all upset that I left you behind."
A single nod was all Batrire gave again.
"Max, you're fine. We know why you did it. I, for one, am grateful that you want to have us with you. No one else has come right out and said it, so I will. We're a bit nervous if you think it's that dangerous. It reminds me of the tower. Every level with you was exponentially more difficult than with Dexic. Yet even as strong as she was, the tower floors were not as easy as they were with you. Each of us knew you would do everything possible to protect us. That meant more than you can ever understand. Fowl often confided in me that he wasn't sure how we could ever have

gotten where we were without knowing firsthand the pressure you felt to make sure we were safe."
"Hey! That was a secret!" their warrior exclaimed, banging his fist on the table. "Don't tell him that, or he'll think I'm soft."
Chuckling, Max winked at his friend, who rolled his eyes.
"No worries, Fowl. I know you're anything but soft."
Snorting, their drinking champion crossed his arms and leaned back in his chair, eyebrows becoming one.
A cough came from Cordellia, and everyone turned to see her grimacing.
"Batrire's right. I want to go. Scared or not, it reminds me of the first boss we faced in the tower. You helped me overcome that fear. When you were gone and we were in the tower with Dexic, there was a really difficult fight. I'm fairly certain the only reason we lived was that sword you made her. The next fight wasn't easy, but we had to do it; otherwise, we would give up and never believe in ourselves. If I chose to back out now, part of me knows I may never step up again."
"So then it's settled. We'll go tomorrow night. I'll get us in. Whatever happens, we face as a team."
Tanila leaned over and grabbed his hand, squeezing it as she smiled.
"As a family, Max. That's what we are."
***
"I haven't missed this oversized baby carrier," Fowl groaned as Max cinched up the last of the straps, securing everyone to him.
"Oh, please, we all know you enjoy being toted around," he replied. "Now remember, no talking or making noises. And when we start to fall, I promise you, we'll be fine."
Their warrior grunted once more, saying nothing.
With everyone in place, Max moved to the edge of the trees and jumped onto the waiting spear made of air, rising quickly into the night sky.
A few breaths were louder than normal, and he could sense everyone's heart begin to beat faster as they moved higher into the sky.
"Ockrim's beard," Fowl cursed silently. "The town… it's huge."
"That it is. Now stop talking. We're fine for now, but I don't want to risk anything as we get close."
Having reminded them all of the order not to speak, Max focused on their approach.
It's not that much more mana to do this. Your coordination is exceptional to be able to perch like that with all of them on you. The wind that is buffeting you isn't to be taken lightly.
Grinning like a fool, Max knew what Bob was talking about.
Standing sideways on the spear, bent forward slightly, he was grateful for the wider surface that this spear had.
He could feel Tanila's hand on his side, holding on to his shirt. None of them were wearing armor, as they didn't want any light reflecting off them.
Are we taking bets on if anyone pisses themselves?
If I had money, it would be on your dwarf friend.
***
Two people had been moving around the streets closest to the building in the center, requiring him to wait a little longer, half a mile above a town that shouldn't have been there.
"It's clear," Cordellia whispered, even though no one could hear her up there.
Seeing that she was right, Max grinned.
"I'm serious now. No one scream. We'll be fine. Everyone ready?"
He could sense the head bobs and felt them all tightening up.
Let's go.
The spear he had been balancing on vanished, and he began to plummet. He heard a few quick breaths come as they descended at first.
In his mind he knew when the spear would form again and at what angle, and when it did, Max felt everyone react to the change in angle and speed.

Once more, he was an arrow, streaming toward the covering and the door for the building in the center, this time not wanting to try to move all of them across the city road.
Be ready; you're coming in a little faster than last time. I'll adjust the angle and speed a bit.
You got this. I can already tell the difference .
As one, they worked together, eyes focused on the point he would land, seeing the small clearing of land near the building, which he would impact a dozen yards from the entrance.
The spear he was on vanished, replaced by another as he jumped on it. A different angle and speed were set, and his trajectory could be corrected.
His boots hit the ground with only the slightest sound.
A gulping sound came from the dwarf warrior on his chest, but thankfully, nothing followed after it.
Without waiting any longer, Max moved toward the door, keeping everyone in the harness, and quickly repeated the process from yesterday, undoing the bricks, swinging the entire door open, and then getting inside.
Having secured the bricks again, he entered Stealth, glad that it affected everyone, something he had tested in the woods, unsure at first how it would react to this many people.
Seems like one could sneak an army somewhere if they were strong enough and able to carry them all.
Perhaps… but it might be better to use your dimensional space next time.
We talked about that… I'm still not certain it's safe for them, and I don't want to risk that. Even if it's not a long time.
Bob did not argue as they reached the intersection of the hallway and moved to the door they would enter.
A few seconds passed, and the door moved open and Max shuffled quietly into the room that hadn't changed since yesterday.
Once it was shut, everyone breathed a sigh of relief, and he began undoing their straps, freeing them to get down.
"I… I threw up… and swallowed it," Fowl moaned.
"Smart move," Max replied as he swapped out his black outfit for all of his gear. "I'm fairly certain the stench would have attracted attention."
"Dear gods… those people."
Max sensed Cordellia moving to where one of the corpses was and could see the pained expression on her face.
"Who would do such a thing?" she asked.
"That's what we're going to find out and hopefully put a stop to," he replied. "Now then, once I open the next part, we'll need to be quiet again. Any questions?"
Seeing that everyone was ready and no one appeared to want to talk, he tried to ignore how they were all staring at the bodies, sensing the shudders most had experienced.
You seem more agitated than usual. What is it?
As Bob worked his ability to cause the stone table to slide away, a hint of something Max couldn't put a finger on filled his mind.
The area feels stronger than it did yesterday. Like… I don't know… be careful.
Doing his best to keep a calm face, Max motioned to everyone to follow him, going down the stairs first.
At the bottom, another hallway led in two directions: one moving away from the building they were in and one that seemed to wrap back around itself and under the center one.
Without needing to ask, he could sense where Bob felt they should go and pointed to the right, leading the group to the corner and checking down it.

One hundred feet of hallway stretched ahead, only worked stones and the occasional lightstone visible. Doing his best not to sigh, Max gave a hand signal and motioned for them to wait a few seconds while he scouted ahead.
Each step took him farther from his friends, a sensation that bothered him greatly. After getting halfway with no traps being detected, he motioned for them to follow, continuing down the hallway to where it turned again.
More steps...
It would appear that what we sense is underground.
Never a good thing.
***
After well over twenty minutes of moving downstairs, hallways like the first one finally ended when Max saw that the area they were now in opened up.
Gone were the twenty steps and the hundred-foot hallways. Instead, there was a cavern about fifty yards wide that went downward. He could sense stairs lining the walls on the outer edges and descending into the darkness below.
Dim light could be seen at the bottom, and there was the faintest noise of people.
Bringing his friends close, Max activated the item Everett had given him, creating a small bubble of space where they could talk.
“Someone or something is down there, but it looks like a quarter mile or so down. I’ll go first. You four stay here and be ready in case someone comes from behind. If it’s safe, I’ll come get you.
“Don’t worry,” Fowl said as he held his shield and hammer. “I’ll protect them.”
Smiling, he gave his friend a nod and then winked at Tanila.
“I’ll be back.”
Leaving the item with them, Max began moving down the stairs, moving in the darkness that enveloped them, no lightstones lighting up this path.
It seems like a smart move. Not having lights up here would make it so that if anyone did come down and needed one, they would alert those below.
It would be wise to assume that most people do not have the talent you do, the ability to sense the steps, and everything else.
Time felt like it was moving slowly, but Max knew the truth. Even in Stealth, he was descending down the stairs with speed most would find impossible to match in a full sprint. In moments, he reached the bottom, seeing an area inset on the opposite side.
Two men in leather armor played cards at a small table, their sides turned to the stairway.
I can take them out... kill or...
You don’t kill for no reason. Knock them unconscious. Just make sure that you use enough force. There is no way to know how strong anyone here really is.
Not wanting to waste the time remaining on Stealth, Max moved toward the pair of guards, judging the distance between them and where they sat.
Knowing he could do what he hoped, he grabbed both men by the back of the head, smashing them into one another.
A sickening crunch came as one skull cracked and the other did not.
Neither man moved, but Max didn’t need to check. One had not made it.
Cursing to himself, he sighed, seeing the red glow surrounding him.
I will take care of that.
[Consume is Cleansing JIH1U08]
[Consume has finished Cleansing JIH1U08]
Max felt only the slightest bit of relief, knowing he wouldn’t be labeled a killer to anyone who saw him. Still, the corpse on his right proved that he was one.
Not wanting to wait, he pulled a boulder from his storage and used his skill to bind the other one still alive, securing both feet and hands while also creating a stone gag.
Leaving the fallen one there, Max raced up the stairs, startling his friends.
“You can come.”
No one said a word, but their eyes told him they sensed something was wrong.

Without waiting and not wanting to have to explain multiple times, he turned and moved back down the stairs.
Arriving well before the rest, he had time to inspect the guards, finding one had a key ring in storage. At the end of the inset section of the crafted room was a door and a lock that looked like the keys he held would open.
“Is he…”
“He is,” Max replied, answering Batrire’s question. “I used too much force.”
Taking the key ring, Max moved toward the door, anxious to see if all this was worth what he had just done and trying to ignore Bob’s growing agitation.
Behind this door… something… something is there.
It only took three tries to find the right key out of the ten, and when the door swung open, a slight creak coming from the metal hinges, Max saw the doors that lined the hallway behind it. There were four metal doors on each side, all with a small lightstone right outside them. At the end of the hall was one more door that looked different from the rest.
Inside were the sounds of someone breathing.
It was multiple people breathing.
Giving hand signals, he stealthed, moving up to the first door. Inside the cell he could hear someone breathing. Peering through the small opening, his heart felt pain upon what he saw.
Bound in chains and lying on the floor was a person wedged up in a corner, tucked into the fetal position.
The only movement came from their chest, and he could sense that they were awake, pretending not to be by how their heart rate started to rise the longer he stood there.
Making his way past that one, he checked and found three more people, one in each cell.
At the end of the hallway, he stopped, holding the keyring in his hand, and flipped through the keys, finding the one he felt had to be it, based on its shape and size.
Dropping Stealth, Max turned around and motioned for his party to follow him, waiting near it till they were all close.
Holding the box that granted them a little silence pocket, Tanila spoke first.
“People? Down here? Are they like you?”
Shrugging, Max frowned.
“I don’t know, but whatever is behind all this is back here. Are we ready?”
Batrire nodded, casting her buff.
Slipping the key inside, Max unlocked the door and slowly swung it open.
As the door stopped its swing, a few inches from hitting the wall, torches began to ignite in the room he had just opened. Lightstones flared and burned red.
Everything that he saw shocked him, but even more so was what Tanila said.
“It… it can’t be…”
//Links

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/106042/the-hallowed-world-isekai-crafting-progression

31 Chapter 360 - Gold Eyes and Hair https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2072294/chapter-360-gold-eyes-and-hair;[2025-02-17 15:45]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 360 - Gold Eyes and Hair

“What? What is it?” Fowl asked.
Tanila started to move past Max, and he held a hand out to stop her.
“Let me search first.”
He could see the tears that had formed, and her eyes were fixated on the vials on a shelf across the room.
A large stone *X* was in the center of the room, stained with blood that had also marred the floor. Near the place he assumed the head would go was a small crystal shard. Along the stone floor was a circle of crystal that surrounded the entire room. Nine lines converged in the middle where the stone *X* and crystal were.
Bob? What am I seeing?
Everything hit him at once as his skill used his eyes and Sonar.
Tubes were hanging on pegs, red liquid still dripping from a few. Jars filled with what he knew had to be blood were lining multiple shelves near them.
On the opposite side of the room, Tanila’s eyes were transfixed by vials that looked familiar. After a moment, he realized why she was reacting that way.
A slight hint of magic and power came from them.
“No one move. Give me just a moment to sweep the room.”
Leaving them there, Max circled the round room, dodging the sections on the floor he knew were bodily fluids or something else. No warning came, and no traps were detected. Stopping near the crystal shard that hummed with energy, he could feel Bob almost vibrating.
“It’s safe, just don’t touch anything,” he warned.
“We need to burn this all down!” Tanila exclaimed as she hurried to the shelves behind him.
“Why? What is it?” Batrire asked, following her friend.
As the pair moved to the vials, Max studied the shard the length of his arm. Its color was off. All the ones he could remember were clear, unless someone was engaged with it.
Bob?
This… Someone is using this to access the system. What they are doing is… highly unlikely… impossible, most would say but knowing what I know… it’s not. It’s just very costly and challenging. To have that knowledge and ability…
“Max! We need to destroy these!”
Turning to see Tanila, who was pointing at the vials, her whole arm was trembling. Moving to where she was, he already knew what he was looking at.
“Are those really red skill elixirs?” he asked.
Gasps came from everyone but Tanila, who nodded.
“I… I had read stories and heard tales but thought it was foolishness. Stories of this… in a book, long ago… Someone from Thuyja has come here.”
Her voice sounded scared, and for the first time, Max felt the pressure of everything around him.
What would it mean if someone was here, brought by the elven goddess?
That we are in trouble. I have no way of knowing their true power but for them to be here, working with humans, draining life and skills, and creating things like this… we need to—
Bob’s words were cut off as cries came from the hallway they had used to enter here. He moved toward the door, getting between it and his friends, shield and weapon out as a figure moved past the cell doors and toward them.
His eyes couldn’t believe what his Sonar told him.
An elf, almost eight feet tall, strode with a power that he could sense from here. She moved with a grace and command that rivaled many of the powerful beings he had encountered on the other world.

Gold eyes and hair radiated along the hallway, sending out light that announced her presence.
“Who is that?” Fowl asked.
Max could feel Tanila moving her hand, reaching for her wrist.
Cordellia was grabbing her chest, struggling to breathe.
“Toys? What kind of toys have entered my domain?”
Her voice was like a siren, pleasant to the ear, begging Max to surrender his will.
Every battle he ever fought for his will was nothing compared to this moment as it slammed into him harder than any blow Igarra had ever hit him with.
A roar inside his head pushed back, and Max felt Bob surge with power, holding the overwhelming force from taking over.
[Consume has Resisted a Skill]
He could sense the change in Tanila, the power that began to flow from her as the bracelet was dismissed and her true presence was revealed.
As her hair and eyes must have been turning gold to match the woman walking toward them, he could finally detect the others behind her, each one an elf outfitted in armor and weapons.
“Royal blood? Sister, why have you invaded my place?! Do you not know the—”
She stopped, eyes moving from Tanila and back to him.
Max could sense her tensing, seeing that he was the only one besides Tanila still standing, his friends having fallen to the ground, struggling to breathe.
“Who are you? One who can resist my force?”
“I was about to ask who you were,” Max replied, watching as she stood a few feet into the room, allowing the three elves who moved from behind her, flanking her slightly, ornate swords pointed toward him.
A frown appeared, and once more, the force of whatever skill she tried to use slammed into him.
[Consume has Resisted a Skill]
[Intimidation]
“Enough!”
His own power swept out across the room, and the three with her buckled, dropping to the ground as his shout finished.
Only the slightest flinch came, and then a smile formed that looked evil. More white teeth showed as it grew larger and larger by the second.
“You are strong… I am going to have so much fun draining you of whatever you possess. Now tell me, who are you and why are you here? I won’t ask again.”
“Who are you?!” Tanila shouted, the struggle in her voice apparent by how it wavered.
“Foolish child, you are nothing… to think you would—”
“She asked you a question. Answer it, and I will answer yours,” Max growled, cutting off the elf.
A snarl appeared, replacing the twisted smile, and those golden eyes narrowed, focusing on him.
Bob… tell me what we’re up against! What should I do?
He could sense the way his skill was acting like a caged animal. Something was wrong.
You need to get away. Take her from here. Do not fight in here !
Without needing to be told, Max felt the skill that needed to be used.
“Forgive me,” he whispered, not hesitating as he raced forward.
A wall of power began to form before him, but Max didn’t care.
His time as a prisoner had taught him more about fighting than the tower ever did.
Even though a smirk had started to form, a second spell of magic brewing above her own barrier, Max showed nothing but the grim determination of someone who fought for a different reason.
[Demonic Teleportation]
His sudden appearance against her wasn’t a strike. A green glow covered her as his arms wrapped around her.

[System Travel - Planetary]
The scream that came from the elf he had grabbed caused him to smile, allowing him to ignore the pain of the blow she landed on his back before the purple portal snatched them away.
***
Rolling along the sand, Max stood in a moment, facing the elf who had dashed backward dozens of yards, trying to recover from the spell, a sword now in each hand.
“What?! Where are we?!”
[Regeneration]
A bone popped back into place as Max knew exactly where he was.
His own weapon appeared. Even though he could shape it to whatever he wanted, he stuck with the halberd he had been using for so long. It provided comfort, especially knowing he had just used a skill he didn’t want to waste.
What comes next is going to take a lot of work to gauge. Be careful. This one could be similar in power to Igarra.
But we defeated Igarra. Surely we—
I had a well of power to draw upon for that fight. My limits are low, but you were wise enough to let me choose the battleground.
Max grinned, knowing exactly what Bob was talking about, already sensing the worms moving around in the sand.
Using his Sand Mastery skill, he created a barrier of sand under his feet, sensing when a few worms slammed into it, unable to get through from underneath.
The elf didn’t have the same luxury, yet she moved at a speed that left him wondering about her true stats.
It appeared that a surprise attack hadn’t been a problem for her, both swords bisecting the worm.
When she went to kick the piece quivering near her, she stopped just a few inches away and backed up.
Scowling, she slashed at the others that came at her, and Max didn’t waste time, knowing that he needed every element of surprise he had.
[Fire Familiar]
As the glowing ball of flames grew near him, Bob summoned a real fireball and let it grow in size and power.
He dashed forward, weapon ready, ready to take any advantage he had, using his own ability with sand to create distractions and mess with his opponent.
The very ground beneath her began to suck her under for a half second, and that was all he needed, his weapon slashing toward the elf.
Both swords came up, parrying the strike, sending her flying backward about fifty yards, sliding through the sand.
Max had often thought that Tanila’s golden eyes were beautiful and was often sad that she didn’t let him gaze into them more often.
If it had been possible, the pair staring at him right now would have shot beams of pure magic. Nothing but his death would satiate their hunger.
A pair of air blades came rushing toward him, sensed by the sandstorm he was creating, cutting through distance with a speed he knew far too well.
His ball of fire sped toward the elf, a wall of air stopping one wind blade, his weapon deflecting the second.
Each point of contact let out a thunderous boom as the power of those spells connected.
She dodged his fireball, feet moving rapidly across the sand that he tried to use as a quagmire to slow her down, not in one place long enough to do anything.
As Bob worked on summoning other spells, he turned the sand into daggers, sending them like a rain of arrows at his opponent. He watched as she hacked and deflected them, the few that made it past her defenses not appearing to cause any lasting damage at all.
Each cut healed on its own, and Max sensed a growing power coming from her.

Like an arrow, she shot toward him, no longer on the defensive, and he met her head-on, his weapon in one hand and gorgon shield in the other.
In less than a second, each of them had rained down multiple blows upon the other, only to have them deflected or parried, combos broken by each other.
The worms were foolish, trying to capitalize upon the fighting pair, yet none could catch them as they danced around the hot sand, sending up a spray of dust and flying fragments, all controlled by Max and sent back at his opponent's face.
Bob unleashed a bolt of lightning, but a shield of air stopped it. The magical energy struck the sand around them, turning it into glass.
It crunched under their feet as both of them worked to get a sense of the other's abilities, each strike able to cut down an average person with ease, yet neither using a skill.
Legendary... weapon... Dual Wield is high, too...
She has some detection field like yours… and wind or mastery of some kind. Different but similar.
Each of them shared thoughts between the hundreds of attacks and strikes that came, creating large divots in the sand as they took turns getting knocked back through it from the impact of each blow.
With death so close and the potential of never seeing his friends again, Max couldn't help himself.
He smiled.
And then he started to laugh, ignoring the slight nicks he took when her blade managed to get past his guard and land a shallow gash.
Staring at his opponent, Max could see the expression on her face change as well.
Her smile was back.
Both knew this was a battle like none had faced in a while, and the only way it would end was when one of them died.

//Links

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/106126/last-lord-of-the-fey-launches-feb-17th

32 Chapter 361 - Choosing The Battlefield https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2074327/chapter-361-choosing-the-battlefield; [2025-02-18 15:02]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 361 - Choosing The Battlefield

Miles of desert lay plowed like a field prepared for planting.
Each of them sent out spells that carved through the sand like it wasn't even there.
Max's own Sand Mastery had been sending blocks of glass from countless directions, trying to slow down or do damage, but none of the attacks that landed had any lasting impact.
To the left. Keep moving left. Draw her that way.
Bob's plan was a solid one. He needed the tactical advantage, and his attempts to appear a little weaker had drawn her renewed assault.
A golden braid never moved, no matter how fast she did, and it was only after a few minutes that Max figured out she had to have a helm like his.

Lightning had come from her once, but after Bob had deflected it, she didn't send another attack like that, choosing instead to use the wind blades that provided a more significant threat.
He had almost taken a surprise attack from behind by her, but his Sonar skill had detected the incoming pair of blades she had sent from the rear.
An air wall and a stone wall stopped the pair, only for a third one to come from above.
Had Bob not handled the two from behind, Max wasn't confident he could have deflected all three.
Using sand, he had created a glass wall that shattered upon impact, thankfully slowing down the spell enough that the damage it did when it struck his shoulder healed quickly as he moved away from her.
Both of them had a sheen of sweat on their faces from the heat and exertion.
When do you want to go on the offensive?
Not yet. She doesn't know all of your skills. It's enough that you have teleportation and the ones you do. I'm confident she has some in check. Remember, once spent, the cooldown starts to matter.
Berserker?
No. Trust me. My plan is better.
Max gave up the discussion, knowing it was distracting and he needed to stay focused.
Each time the elf began to break away, he attacked, forcing her back into the fight.
"I thought your people were skilled. Perhaps the noble blood isn't anything at all."
"How dare you speak my language! You are not worthy!"
"I'm certain you're not worthy to be called a royal," Max shot back, dodging to the side to avoid a strike while blocking the other sword.
She roared, attacking with a bit more enthusiasm.
Each time he parried, the sensation of the impact flowed through his body.
He knew she wasn't stronger, but it wasn't by much. All Max needed to do was keep her moving and following the direction Bob was leading him. From there, he knew the real fight would begin.
***
Overhead, the sun baked everything below, but as the pair approached the mountain area Bob had directed him toward, she slowed up her attacks, requiring Max to engage more often.
"Where are you trying to lead me?! Don't think I can't tell that you're simply trying to bait me!"
Laughing, Max shook his head.
"Stay out here. The time is almost upon us. I would rather not die when it comes!"
He began backing way faster, directing himself toward the mountains.
She looked around, unsure for a moment, at the man who was leaving her out there.
The sand began to tremble and shake, and Max felt what she was trying to do.
[System Travel - Block Successful]
A scream came from the woman as she raced toward him.
"It won't work here! Only one place does!" he yelled, keeping on his path toward the mountains.
A salvo of wind blades came at him, and without having to worry about her swords, he quickly deflected them, grinning like a fool the entire time.
Suddenly a pair of his own took shape and toward her, earning a scowl and another howl from the woman as she deflected them with her weapons.
It would appear you've learned how to make those as well.
Yes. It took some time, but I figured out how. The hard part was sending them so that they flew correctly. I tried a few up higher in the sky out of your Sonar skill and hopefully out of range of whatever she has, trying to get it right. Later, we can discuss it, but pick up the pace.
Sand spears and wind blades barraged his opponent from all sides, and Max sensed an attack coming from her that differed from the rest.

Leaping into the air, he aimed off the air wall Bob summoned, watching the wind attack that rushed downward from above. A rain of smaller air blades twisted and turned in a spherical pattern, each moving in almost random directions as they cut through the space he was in.
Storing his weapon, Max swapped it out for a second shield, trying to summon defenses to help against the onslaught. His Sonar skill was going crazy trying to track the hundreds of blades that filled the entire area.
[Blink]
Pain lanced through his body as a blade swept between the shields he held. The sound of flesh being cut was louder because of how heightened his Sonar skill was right now.
[Demonic Teleportation]
It took both abilities to move far enough away that Max could sense that he was almost at the outer edges of the trap his opponent had obviously been setting up.
Leave it! Keep moving!
Back in the desert, blood flowed from the arm that had been cut clean off, the second shield that he carried still in its hand.
Already, regeneration was doing its job, stopping the blood and growing a new arm, yet Max's biggest concern was how easily that spell had cut his armor.
With renewed vigor, his opponent began to chase him, and Max ran, this time not wasting time for taunts or anything else, letting Bob handle the defenses as the number of wind blades increased, as did their thickness.
Holding his shield over his upper body, he summoned blocks of sand, creating jumping points as he dodged and weaved, getting sprayed with sand when her spells impacted the ground he had been on.
Max sent each particle that was sent airborne toward her, turning it into small pieces of glass that created a shimmering effect in the air.
What is she doing?
Finally getting serious. Like us, she has not even shown her true power. I'm afraid that the fight will be far worse than I had anticipated. You—
Bob's voice stopped as he sent wind and ice spells to parry another salvo of attacks, this time eight blades whirling in random directions, all shifting and changing to find Max. Three of the blades he had evaded had looped around, coming at him again and requiring more effort to keep up defenses.
It's like a boomerang! She can either keep them tracking or attacking you, or it's something else.
Walls of sand grew, forming into hardened glass, helping Bob, who dealt with the blades coming from above. Large chunks of black glass flew through the air as her spell destroyed them.
Ahead was the wall of stone that had at one point made him wonder if climbing it was even possible. Now he knew that it was.
When we reach that place, I can't hold back. If I flee, she'll just return to our world, right?
Bob finished defending against another barrage of attacks, sending a few blades of his own at the elf, who easily deflected them.
Glancing over his shoulder, Max could see the smile she wore, a predator chasing down a meal, enjoying the hunt.
Correct. This fight ends here one way or another.
Skills and combinations of spells ran through his mind as he considered his options. This last year of his life had been a constant battle, and every trick he had learned, all the things Bob had shown him played out in his mind as he ran for his life.
Clenching the fist of his regrown right arm, Max said a silent prayer to someone that Tanila and the others would be okay. With what he was facing here, his fear of how his friends were doing in the room he had left them, ate at him.
Focus!
Bob's words brought Max back to the moment, and due to his wandering mind, he had to burn his ability again to evade another set of air blades.

[Demonic Teleportation]
The blast of sand turned into glass again, the spot he had been now a crater from the spell's impact that would have potentially ended his life.
Less than a minute, and then we are there. Be ready.
Max wanted to smile and laugh.
One moment, the stone wall was out of view, and the next, he was almost there, his speed and the elf's easily covering the distance like it was nothing.
Racing ahead, he prepared for what was to come, knowing that however this played out, it was going to hurt and require every skill he had.
Max began drawing upon his Stone Mastery skill as his foot touched the first section of rock, the small shelf that provided safety from the sand and what lived inside it.
Wait… just a little more.
A second later, he was against the wall, back to it, facing the elven woman, who had both swords out. Small flecks of blood were present around her eyes and mouth, long dried by the hot sun. Standing about twenty-five yards away, it was obvious she felt this was her victory.
"You're trapped and soon to be dead… tell me… who are you, so I can write down the name of another in my book."
Her taunt and the smirk she wore rubbed Max wrong, but he glanced both ways, playing the part, letting everything unfold as he hoped.
Maybe twelve more seconds.
"Just promise me you won't kill the woman back on my world! Then I will."
She snorted, shaking her head and pointing the tip of one sword at him.
"That I will not do… perhaps she will find favor or forgiveness from our god, but that isn't a promise I can make. To have seen what she did… it will cost her. As for you…"
Larger blades than ever before began to form all over and around her. Thicker and twice his height, almost a dozen of them were floating above her in the air, spreading out to surround him from every side but his back.
"Any last words?"
Her teeth were on full display as she grinned.
"Just make sure to tell Thuyja when she sees your soul in the afterlife that Max Hoste says hello."
Both of her eyes widened, the golden glow seeming to lessen just a moment. As her mouth opened slowly, words started to form, and he attacked.
Large blocks of stone, each larger than a cart, began to rain down upon where she was, sent with a force well beyond what simple gravity could cause.
She reacted, sending her blades at him, streaking faster than ever before.
Dust filled the air as stones crashed into the rock, and her blades cut into the wall.
[Demonic Teleportation]
Bob had it timed perfectly. The last air blade was just inches from his back where he appeared, their momentum unable to be stopped as each of them carved through the stone.
His arm bled, the knife he had stuck in it causing a trickle to come forth as Max found safety from her original attack.
[Demonic Summoning]
Everything changed as the world began to shift and transform into the kaleidoscope that signaled the coming of what he needed.
A river of blood flowed from his wound, far more than he could ever remember the last time, rose into the air, and began to form a rune that he knew meant one thing.
Consumer of Souls.
He shuddered as the rune grew, turning into liquid lava, and then vanished when it finally seemed ready to burn brighter than the sun.
Next came the black-and-purple door. Unlike the other times when it was a portal, something new took place. Like a living tapestry almost, it towered easily thirty feet into the air, covered in grotesque imagery of demons slaughtering so many other creatures, their actions shifting and changing every second.

As power pulsed around it, a loud boom sounded, and then the door swung open. No claws had pushed it apart.
Behind it was a room, and as Max gazed through the opening, it reminded him of what a throne room might look like. Large ornate pillars lined a hall, and far away was a large chair, made of what looked like countless bodies mashed together.
A creature he didn’t recognize stood at the entrance of the door.
The twenty-foot-tall demon he had been expecting wasn’t there.
No red flaming skin covered this being.
Instead, Max thought it looked almost comical compared to what he had expected.
A seven-foot-tall demon, bald like the one who had summoned it, with purple skin, red eyes, and human-like features, stood there in nothing more than a simple pair of black shorts. Every part of its body was rippled with muscles, but Max could feel the power coming from it.
“You… have changed me… again.”
“Sog’thollech?”
Like thunder, his laughter filled the area they stood in and was weird, considering the size of the demon before him.
“Yes. No doubt my appearance does not match what you were expecting.”
Chuckling a little, Max bobbed his head.
“I had expected perhaps a forty-foot-tall demon with larger horns this time,” he admitted. “Still, I can feel the power that comes from you. Tell me, what does this mean?”
Striding past the doors, the demon moved to where Max stood and snapped his fingers.
The black-and-purple door closed without making a sound, vanishing the moment the edges touched.
“There is much to share, but let me ask you, why have you summoned me? I only sense one being outside this place.”
Nodding, Max motioned in the direction of the elf woman. Her body was frozen, unmoving beyond the shimmering barrier.
“She is probably just as strong as I am. That is why I need your help.”
//Links

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/106116/riftside-litrpg-fantasy-adventure

33 Chapter 362 - Drawing Out One’s Trump Card

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2076325/chapter-362-drawing-out-ones-trump-card;[2025-02-19 15:02]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Okay—I rarely say, 'This is OMG a book I love,' but this series is one of my favorites.

if you haven't checked out the Bog Standard Isekai [L1] - you're missing out.

Book 3 just hit Amazon a day or two ago, and I will say it's a blast.

Chapter 362 - Drawing Out One’s Trump Card

Sog’thollech frowned as the demon gazed past the barrier of time they stood in.
“A being as strong as you… tempting, and yet the risk of death is so great. Tell me, do you mean to fight this one with me or use me as a distraction while you run?”

No emotion was visible as those red eyes stared at him.
“I am not the kind of person to casually throw a life away, especially when one like yourself has been an ally of mine.”
Nodding, the demon turned, and his nostrils flared as he took a deep breath.
“Like all of my kind who have offered ourselves up to be summoned, we know that one day always comes when we will die. It is the price we pay to gain power.”
“So you can die? Like I can?”
“Before, had I fallen in battle… it would have been different,” Sog’thollech replied. “Had I died early on, I could have potentially escaped before my soul was torn forever from my body. Many hope to do that, but the stronger we become, the more dangerous it is to accept the summoning again. Now I am bound to you forever, unable to resist the call even if I wanted to, having accepted the call three times. I have become strong enough to reach the rank of royalty in my realm, and many under me now feed me part of their power to stay protected.”
“Why would they do that?”
Chuckling, the demon shrugged.
“Do not your worlds have kings, champions, or warlords who offer protection but for a price? Some call them taxes. Others call it slavery. Still, some beings demand flesh for their protection. None of that is different in our world. To be a demon without a lord or someone to watch over it opens them up to abuse and death. Now, I can choose my battles unless the king demands I act. Each time I have grown, he has gotten a portion of my power, and as such, has granted me much after our last adventure together. This body before you might not look like much, but only a fool would attack me.”
Both of them stood there in silence for a moment.
Ask him about the bond. Does it feel different to him?
“When I call you and use my blood, does it feel different?”
His red eyes grew as the skin above them moved upward a little.
“It did… At first, I was shocked at the difference in power that came and wondered if someone had for a moment killed you. That kind of growth does not typically happen so fast, and only the ending of one’s life could do that.”
“Someone else could use my blood?” Max asked, cringing slightly.
“Had another summoner slain you, drained your entire life force, and used your blood, they could then summon me,” Sog’thollech replied. “That is one of the dangers of this ability. If you encounter another one with it, be careful. The power your blood possesses and what another summoner could do with your blood is dangerous.”
“How much time do we have before the barrier comes down?”
Sog’thollech grinned.
“Days… maybe a week in your terms. This is the advantage of your power. Time to strategize and prepare, for what we face increases.”
A chair appeared in each of Max’s hands, and he offered one to Sog’thollech.
“Grab a seat, my friend, let’s talk tactics.”
***
“Max… thank you again for this.”
Shaking the demon’s hand, he smiled.
“Thank you. Without your help, I wouldn’t be here today.”
“I doubt that… but still. You treat me like an equal, but I can clearly tell you are not. For that, even if my death is required today to fulfill the bargain, I will gladly give it.”
Sog’thollech bowed his head briefly and then rose to full height, cracking his neck as he grinned.
“Now then, let’s see if what we discussed can actually succeed.”
Max nodded and grinned, watching his ally pull two swords from thin air. Each had a blackness to the blade that almost seemed to suck in light. Neither seemed thick, almost like a rapier when staring at them, but his Sonar told him differently.
Part of the blade is hidden. A very dangerous weapon.
“I’m ready when you are, Sog’thollech,” Max said, retrieving his halberd and shield.

Like rain, the wall of fractured light shattered, and time began to speed up, a pair of swords coming at Max momentarily before his opponent's eyes caught the movement of the demon charging her.
As she prepared to jump backward, the stone blocks prevented a true escape. A wall now thirty feet high towered over her, never having intended to crush her but simply to box the elf in.
Waves of air rushed out from her, pushing her upward and into the air.
Max didn't hesitate. The stones near her at the top left their perch, sliding outward and catching her movement.
She flashed black, and the rocks exploded as a sword pressed upward, cutting a path for her through the large block.
Hot on her heels, Sog'thollech moved through the air after her. A pair of shadow-formed wings had appeared and launched him after his foe.
Let's join this battle.
Rocks were already encased around Max's boots, and he propelled himself into the air, watching a bolt of lightning arc from above down upon the elf.
It struck, slowing her for a moment, and then arced off her, growing in power, and was flung back at him.
Striking his shield, the pain of the spell flowed through his body and bones, yet he shrugged it off, his resistance high enough to handle the pain, letting his regeneration do its job.
Ice bolts, fireballs, stone spears, and air blades began to pepper their elven foe from every direction as the demon engaged her in combat, swords creating sparks that drifted back down toward the desert.
Purple flames began to surround Sog'thollech, stretching over his body as the demon's weapons moved with a speed that no one but Max and the elven woman could track.
He's doing his job, now do yours!
Bob's words finished as Max blasted past the pair, his Stone Mastery skill sending him flying at a speed that made the world below blur.
He saw her eyes track him as he blew past, attempting to shift her position in order not to get pinched between him and the demon.
Yet Sog'thollech never slowed down his assault, deflecting most of the elf's attacks.
A few wind blades made it past his swords, their spells touching the purple flames and winking out of existence.
He's going to run out of time on that ability. How much further?
Seconds. Get ready.
Twisting in the air, Max's hands came up, and the rifle he had taken from the tower floor was now in his hand.
Even though he hadn't really used it more than a few times, his Ranged Mastery weapon skill told him exactly how he needed to use it.
The butt of the rifle was set perfectly in his shoulder, and the stock was resting against his cheek. A scope sat on top, and when he looked through it, his mind quickly tracked the trajectory and distance of the elf.
With the softest touch, his finger pulled the trigger, sending a bullet at the elf, and she twisted, her body somehow even in the air able to move just enough that his shot didn't hit her chest where he had aimed, instead only striking her shoulder.
A spray of red filled the air, and as Max prepared for a second shot, the sky around him grew dark.
His second shot rang out, her sword catching it, splitting the projectile in half as she reversed her course momentarily, plummeting toward the sand below.
Move!
Bob's instructions didn't need the mental command, as Max could sense the air around him turning dangerous, a power of magic and electricity coming from the half-mile he was in the air.
Like a rock, he changed directions, gun out, still trying to get another shot as both he and Sog'thollech attempted to catch the elven woman.

Above Max, a red portal began to appear. Sensing the magical energy, he glanced upward and saw something started to claw its way from the very space he had been near.
Is that a demon?
That… is death…
Max could see that whatever was coming from the portal had a dangerous aura. Even with the distance between him and it growing, a smell of decay came as what looked like an undead dragon of some sort ripped the portal open wide, and a giant dragon skull with taut skin and yellow glowing eyes emerged from the space.
Wings of bone, small pieces of sinew, and rotting flesh came as it fell through the opening and began to come at him.
Its mouth opened up, and a red-greenish glow began to appear, forming like a ball of gas.
I got this, you deal with her! Get Sog'thollech to handle this!
Already, his ally and the elf were on the ground, both of them engaged in combat, and the flames around his demon friend were starting to go out, her swords getting closer as he slid through the sand, leaving burnt trails of where he traveled from the impact of each blow.
"Sog'thollech! Take the other! I got her!"
Laughter came from the woman as Max attacked from above, his halberd moving, shield out.
"Fool! You have no idea!"
The purple demon said nothing, his red eyes locked upward on the descending undead dragon, and a small bob of his head was the only acknowledgment of Max's command.
When his halberd connected to her crossed swords, the concussive blast of the attack sent a shockwave over the desert, a crater forming under the woman as sand washed away in droves.
Air and fire flew from whatever Bob was doing to keep the dragon at bay, and it was now that Max truly appreciated how special their bond was.
He could focus on the woman before him while his skill took care of the dragon above.
"Max Hoste… black skill user! The power! It shall be mine!"
The woman's face was wild with excitement. Her lips were curled in a smile, her teeth partially separated, and her tongue flicked out just a little.
He was sure she was enjoying this—the thought of winning was most likely a guaranteed thing in her mind.
As their weapons traded blows, Max went for it all, ready to finally see what she could do and handle.
I'm going all out.
[Dark Magic]
[Mirrored Image]
[Rampage]
[Quick Attack]
[Ghost Strike]
[Magical Strike]
[Power Strike]
[Berserker]
His vision changed slightly, not letting the true rage overtake him, but as everything went active at once, Max saw her body and swords flicker a half-dozen colors as well.
Gone went her smile, replaced faster than a heart could beat with a grimace as his weapon came at her.
Both swords had gone to intercept his halberd, yet his strike bypassed them, the combination of speed and everything else too much for her to overcome.
His blade struck her collar. Only the abilities of whatever she had used kept his blade from cutting through the blue armor that protected her body.

Still, the power of the first strike drove her deeper into the ground, sending up more waves of pressure and sand, widening the hole they were creating. The crater was now easily fifty yards wide and as deep as a two-story house.
The next two blows came again, the second one finding the same spot, a cut appearing in the armor before the third one was stopped completely, her swords now in a position to block.
Yet as her weapons blocked his strike, her body pressed toward him, his mirrored image landing blows against her back, the two of them juggling her in that space between them.
The real Max's weapon hit harder and faster while his copy provided a distraction and damage.
Above him, the roar of a dragon sounded, but he didn't care. It was outside his sphere of detection, and all Max could focus on was the elven woman, whose eyes were narrowed and her face pained.
Each strike dug them a place down toward the planet's center, acid worms sent flying from the embrace of the sand they lived in, the two beings of power that could destroy most creatures fighting with everything they had.
Seconds felt like hours as the barrage of attacks never stopped, his power overwhelming the woman, sounds of bones breaking from the impact.
Yet she never cried out and continued to hold against him.
And then Max saw what Bob had warned him about.
She smiled as her body glowed red.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

On a side note - don't forget to checkout the collab story I'm writing with Reckless! [L2]

We hit top 10 Rising Stars this week which is super awesome! I'm having a great time getting to be part of helping someone learn our genre and write a story I also enjoy!

//Links

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/amazon/B0DJCKBQMJ

[L2] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/105360/double-classer-in-the-multiverse-a-litrpg-apocalypse

34 Chapter 363 - How One Skill Changes Everything

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2078770/chapter-363-how-one-skill-changes-everything;[2025-02-21 9:19]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link [L1]]

Chapter 363 - How One Skill Changes Everything

His mind knew what was coming next, and the pain that he was about to endure. The conversation with Bob and Sog'thollech, just what had been minutes ago, played out once more.
***
"If you are correct and she can travel through worlds and has the power to drain skills from others, then most likely she has dozens of skills. Her only limit would be the level of them."
Max nodded as Sog'thollech echoed Bob's thought.
He is wise for someone who has risen so fast. Perhaps one day, we could simply summon him to learn more of the system and things of his world. That kind of knowledge would be beneficial for us.
Nodding, Max frowned.
"Tell me, if you could pick skills from people, hold the power inside you, and know they would never be a high rank, what would you focus on?"
His demon friend snorted, leaning back on the chair he had been given, and tapped his large foot.
"A fool would only focus on one kind of ability. You already talked about her speed and strength, so she has a natural ability in combat. Her stats and equipment must be high to compete in the tower, but I believe you are correct. Every tower isn't the same. To hear you are only in the fifties on your world means that you could potentially grow stronger. Can you imagine what that will be like? I can."
A wicked grin appeared on Sog'thollech's face as the demon licked his lips, the purple tongue moistening the skin.
"So spells, abilities, defense and offense. It's a trump card, though. Something that can turn the tide of battle. That's what she will be hiding."
His purple friend nodded.
"I have one such thing. You can cut my head off, carve out my heart or do many other things to me. What matters is that both small cores inside me are not destroyed. If only one is, it will take a while, but I can slowly regenerate and return. Don't ask me how long; I just know it will be months. If both are destroyed, then I shall be gone forever."
"Meaning you could continue to fight without a head?"
Chuckling, Sog'thollech bobbed his head.
"Depending on who I am facing, I might. Otherwise, I would also pretend to die. It might cause fear in one while the other would then destroy every part of me."
Draw out her trump card. Find out what it is. Then we use ours and end this.
I'm going to end this my way. I need answers.
A grunt of disapproval but acknowledgment came from his skill.
That is a dangerous game, but I also understand why you would do such a thing. Do not risk everything for knowledge that you do not need. Some things are not worth dying for.
***
Her swords moved quicker than his halberd, and even in his heightened state, with every offensive ability activated, Max couldn't get his shield in position.
[Evasion]
[Harden Body]
[Bulwark]
[Armored Warrior]
He groaned as her swords struck, the tips piercing his shoulders, one on each side, turning just enough to keep them from striking his heart. She had attacked from above, using her height to her advantage.
She drove them to the hilt, both blades coming out his lower back, her lips almost against his as she evaded his space, a laugh beginning to form in her throat as her lips parted.
"You were almost worthy, Max Hoste," she howled, driving against him, unable to move him as his abilities held him in place. "I shall enjoy draining the life from you."

He coughed, blood spraying her from his mouth onto her smooth, tan skin, wanting to wince as she licked the flecks that had hit her lips.
“No… you won’t…”
[Dimensional Space]
[Ultimate Form]
He wrapped his arms around her, the last remnants of his berserker buff about to draw to an end, only two seconds remaining as a doorway opened up right behind her.
She tried to pull free, but his arms grew, the sound of his flesh tearing as the blades were wedged into his body.
In a moment, strength filled him, and the pain of it all washed away as he drove toward the purple door that stood open. Behind her, a stone room stood ready for what he had planned.
“NO!”
She slammed her head into his growing body, her arms being lifted as he doubled in size, yet Max stayed bent over.
One.
Two.
Three steps propelled him into the area he knew was his domain, the one Bob, Sog’thollech, and he had discussed.
The moment her body crossed the threshold, all of her fight went out of her, and he crashed into the wall inside, crushing her against it.
Willing the door behind him to close, the darkness that came next was unlike anything most would ever experience.
***
He stared at her, crying as she was, tied up with fifty yards of a rope Jazzjak had pointed out in Igarra’s vault. The black material was stronger than anything in his world and couldn’t be cut by any weapon less than epic quality. Even the strongest warriors struggled to break it once wrapped with three cords. She was wrapped in about thirteen.
Sitting in the chair he had summoned, Max massaged the spots on his shoulders even though they didn’t hurt anymore. The knowledge of what had been inside him sent a sensation of discomfort.
“You’ve lost,” he said, giving the lightstone on the floor a slight nudge with his boot. “The only way you get out of here is if I take you out.”
“How?! How can you be this strong?! It’s only been a year!”
Those gold eyes and hair seemed duller here, and Max wasn’t sure if the space they were in was also causing that.
Do you believe she is truly broken?
Her skills and abilities can’t be used. Had you not given her that potion, she would have bled out. This is truly your domain, Max. I’m not sure who could compare in this space, outside of a god.
But to get her to talk… What should I do? Torture her? I… it was hard enough doing that to Terrance. You know how much effort it took me to work up to that. Even now, I’m not certain I can do that again.
I could tell you to imagine her draining your sister’s life, but then what? Would we need to induce a rage every time something hard or difficult comes? No. You need to be able to keep the conviction you always have, no matter what is before you.
Since the beginning, you told me that you are a protector. You said that you will do whatever it takes to keep those you love safe, even if it means killing yourself. Now then, are you willing to do that?
Max ignored the looks he continued to get from his captive, trying to find out how to answer Bob’s questions.
Inside was a struggle. For a year, his skill had told him that he would eventually have to become a monster to protect those he loved. He had denied it, argued against it,

and promised to fight that. Yet, over the last few weeks, he found himself not sure anymore.
“Will you at least tell me your name?”
“No!”
She spat, shaking her head after exclaiming, and shifted to the corner he had set her upright in. Tears still flowed, and all Max knew was that he wouldn’t get anywhere without doing something right now.
How long till I can try to return home?
An hour.
Nodding to no one but himself, Max stood and took the chair, stored it, and bent to pick up the lightstone.
“We’ll talk again. Hopefully, I’ll return before the air runs out.”
“What?!”
Her question came with a bit of a tremble, but Max didn’t care. The door appeared, and light flooded from the desert as he moved to leave.
“I can do this forever. You, on the other hand, can’t. Think about that.”
“Wait!”
As her last cry came and the door shut behind him, Max saw Sog’thollech sitting on the chair he had left for him, a broad grin on his face.
“You need me to end her life? I would be more than happy to.”
Shaking his head, Max sighed.
“No… I need to do a few things before I return home. Would you prefer to return to your place, or you could join me for a moment.”
Rising to his feet, the demon handed Max the chair back.
“Will I be killing anyone?”
Chuckling, Max shook his head and then stopped.
“I hope not. My ability to return home has about an hour before I can use it again. So while I am here, I want to visit the city I technically *own* and ensure things are still in order.”
Both eyes grew as Sog’thollech grinned.
“A city? You have much more to share with me, Max! Still, if someone needs to die, please let me be the one to make it happen.”
“You just want the soul. Not that I mind. Tell me how that dragon’s soul was?”
All of the demon’s teeth were displayed as his face lit up.
“Oh… that was unlike anything I had ever claimed before. Somewhere, something powerful is upset, as it’s connected to them. I can sense it… like a thread… and for now, I own a part of them.”
With a hundred other questions now on his mind, Max pushed them down and held out his hand.
“I need to hold yours while I use this skill.”
Laughing, Sog’thollech nodded and put his purple hand in Max’s.
“Don’t tell your elf woman.”
***
Max wanted to scream as Quilazmore and Jazzjak tried to assault him with about a thousand questions each the moment he appeared in the agreed-upon room and activated the summoning crystal.
It appeared that each one had done their job well. Stacks of documents and chests filled with treasure had been obtained as they reworked the city, changing how things were done and keeping order.
“You need to come to the arena! Just for a moment! We can stop a few who have evaded our attempts of flushing out some troublemakers,” Quilazmore exclaimed.
“Especially if you bring your new friend with you!”
Sog’thollech winked at the dark elf.
“I like him. Perhaps you should let me play in this arena.”
“There isn’t time,” Max replied. “Fifteen minutes tops, and then I need to leave. My original plan was to be here in a week or two for at least seven days, but now… I can’t. In another month, perhaps I can return.”

The nose on his vorpal bunny twitched frantically.
“Fine… but he is right. Your announcement of your presence would be a great thing. Morale is up, security is tight, trade is doing well, and the tower has been reopened. All the people they believe care enough to show they are around.”
Leave the demon, and go show yourself. His time will end, but his presence will be enough. You agreed that this place would be important and didn’t want to toss lives away. The mantle of leadership means sometimes sacrificing other desires.
Groaning, Max rubbed his bald head and nodded.
Fine… but I swear… someday, I’m going to find someone who can do all the leadership stuff so I don’t have to! I don’t want to spend my days listening to reports and solving disagreements.
And yet, that is exactly what you do, except with a weapon. That is also a way to lead, but the path often turns into one like Igarra’s did.
“Okay, you three are right. Let’s get me to the arena. We’ll make a quick announcement, and you can send it out. Sog’thollech will stay here until his time expires, helping to deal with any problems that arise. Any questions?”
The two smaller men glanced up at the purple demon, who was once again grinning like a madman.
“Uh… he’s not going to eat Quilazmore, is he?” Jazzjak asked.
“No? Why?”
“A vorpal bunny can dream, can’t he?”
//Links

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/amazon/B0DSQHRB5X

35 Chapter 364 - Bob’s Gamble

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2080791/chapter-364-bobs-gamble;[2025-02-21 15:03]

Chapter 364 - Bob’s Gamble

Bob had counted down the seconds for Max, not because he needed to but because it was the only thing keeping him settled as he waited.
“I’ll be back in a month,” he informed the trio. “Sog’thollech, don’t overdo yourself. Simply allow your presence to be noticed and these two to state that you are my emissary. I’ll try to find another time soon so that we can converse.”
The demon bowed, lower than Max had intended.
“It is my pleasure to be known as your arm and blade if required. Travel safe, Max. Until next time.”
Jazzjak hopped once to get closer to Max.
Thirty seconds.
“My wife said she owes you a meal. Do not make me tell her on your next trip that she is not worthy of your presence.”
A chuckle came from Quilazmore, whose grin showed most of his teeth.
“I too feel that pain. Travel well. May your friends know your concern, and may your enemies always fear your blade.”
Five seconds.
Waving once, Max backed up a few steps, his armor and weapons now ready.
As soon as he could, the purple portals came, and he winked out from the large office room he had been standing in, leaving a trio to carry a weight he felt he had yet to deal with properly yet.
“Max!”

His Sonar skill told him that Tanila was coming toward him, having shouted his name as his eyes adjusted to the new place.
Even though it only took a fraction of a second, he could already see the situation that had unfolded.
Three elves were bound in rope, and the love of his life was standing there, radiating power as her hair and eyes shone with the gold light she often hid.
Moving to embrace her, his weapons disappeared, and he ignored the sound of one of the elves spitting, kissing her quickly before turning to see what had happened.
“Any more?”
“Gods no,” Fowl said as he shifted behind the tied-up trio. “Tanila has kept them in check. It appears they understand the importance of her blood.”
“Get your hands off her, you filth!”
The elf on the left spat again, this time at him.
“Do not speak!”
Tanila’s voice boomed in the enclosed area, and the man flinched as if she had struck him with her hand.
Giving her an appreciative glance, Max grinned.
“So what happened?”
“You tell us,” Cordellia said as she moved closer to where he was. He could see the way she moved, the effect of Tanila’s power evident by the distance she had been standing at. “Where is the… princess?”
Max found himself frowning.
I guess we never did ask her that… I still don’t know her name.
Do not worry. For now we need to move from here. I want to access that shard and see if I can learn some things about this place. Just in case, I need you to gather everyone close and be ready. I would also store those three in your dimensional storage with that one.
He held up his hand at seeing how Cordellia was looking at him, tapping his head.
Won’t that reduce the amount of air in there?
You can easily open it anytime and have it cycle through. Or you can kill them. The truth is at some point they must die. You cannot leave witnesses.
Bob’s words felt like he had been kicked in the gut by a dragon. The pain of that almost took his breath away.
It always comes back to that.
For a very long time it will seem that you only have two options, and one will always be death.
“Help me put them in a special place,” Max said as he summoned the door to his dimensional storage. “After that, I can talk and we can decide our next steps. Besides, my friend wants to inspect that shard.”
As the door swung open and the light from the torches and the lightstones filled the skill he had turned into a prison, a moan came from the elf he had tied up.
“Tari!”
Max and Tanila’s head both snapped in the direction of the prisoner who had shouted out that word.
“She’s a queen,” he muttered. “An elven queen…”
“And you defeated her,” Cordellia said, her voice almost a whisper.
Their ranger’s words and the view of the woman the three elves gazed upon caused each of them to slink away, attempting to move back from where Max was.
“How could he capture her? Alive?”
“Quiet!”
The male elf that had shown a backbone for a moment silenced his companion, never taking his eyes off of Max.
“I’m going to put you three with her. Fight me, and you won’t see her again. I will end your life right before the others.”

His glare and tone seemed to convey what he hoped wouldn't need to be done, and none of them said a word as Max grabbed them, easily lifting one in each hand by the rope and carried them to the doorway.
"You all stay out. I'd rather you not experience that again."
None of his team argued, each of them having felt the disconnection of their skills and power upon walking inside the day he showed it to them.
In just a few moments, all three elves were bunched up next to the one they had called *Queen* , and her eyes still burned with hatred.
"Prove to me you can obey, and next time I'll let you have light," Max said as he started to shut the door. "Try to free yourselves, and the death you suffer won't be one I'd ever wish for."
When the door closed and the dimensional space vanished, he turned to see Tanila activating her bracelet, her hair and eyes returning to normal.
"So… how in the gods did you defeat a queen?" Fowl asked. "I mean… how strong was she?"
There isn't time for this. Let me do what I need to, and then you can have that conversation.
Bob's tone was different, and Max could tell he was anxious yet serious at the same time.
"Actually there is one more thing we need to do. Everyone, gather close. I need to let my skill access this and see what we can find. He's a bit… anxious and wants you all nearby in case something… happens? Comes? We're not sure."
Eyebrows furled and moved into one, but a grunt was all their warrior gave, moving to the stone *X* near the skill shard.
"Should we be worried?" Batrire asked as she joined Fowl.
"I don't know, but after what I just faced… and not knowing what all this is, it's better to be safe."
Tanila came up and grabbed his hand, squeezing it and walking with him as they crossed the room.
It was then that he noticed everything that had been on the shelves was missing.
"Where did—"
"Destroyed. I'll tell you later," she replied, her voice hard and rougher than usual.
Bobbing his head, he squeezed her hand and then motioned to everyone to take a few steps back.
"I'm not sure what will happen nor how long this might take. So just give me a few feet."
No one said anything as they exchanged a few glances and gave Max the space he asked for.
Taking a deep breath, he moved till he was just inches from the small sliver of the shard, staring at its dull color.
You ready?
I am… but you cannot join me on this one. Last time it was hard enough to bring you and show you what I see. Even now I can sense… something different from this shard. Forgive me, but you'll be unable to move or see anything in this world or in there.
You make me feel like we're in for such a good time.
A small chuckle came, and Max could sense the change in Bob's tone.
I won't lie to you. Something about the way this feels almost scares me.
***
"Everyone to me now!"
The world swirled around Max as he heard his own voice come from his lips.
An intense pain like someone had cracked open his skull and was reaching in, pulling his brain out one handful at a time, made it impossible to see or think.
Even still, his Sonar skill sent enough information to him that the others were coming to where he was, stumbling backward from the shard that had a high-pitched whine coming from it.
"Max?" Tanila asked, grabbing his arm when she got close.

He could sense the tension in her voice, the beating of her heart, and yet none of it felt right.
"Touch me!"
Once again words came on their own, and he finally realized it was Bob doing all of this.
What—
No time! Hold on!
A heat began to build from behind him where the shard was, cracks forming along it, and Max could sense the power that was starting to escape it.
Four different hands all touched him, and the moment they did he felt his skill activate.
[Planetary Travel - Waypoint]
The only thing he could sense as the portal moved them away was that the back part of his body felt on fire, a sensation of pain starting to give the one that felt like dwarves were taking turns hammering his skull a run for its money.
***
"Max! Max!"
Tanila's voice sounded so distant, and yet he knew she was right up against him.
It felt like someone had taken a giant fishhook and run it through his chest and skull.
Then they were jerking on both ends, sending pain through his heart and mind.
"What… Bob?"
His words were slurred, and he could tell that they weren't coming out right.
"What's he saying? I can't understand him!"
"I don't know!"
Blinking didn't help Max see, his eyes not working, yet he knew Fowl and Tanila were talking.
"The shard. What happened? Did…"
[Consume is Modifying Language]
[Language is Corrupted]
[Fixing]
[…]
[…]
[Language Reset]
A cool breeze felt like it was washing over the inside of his mind, and the throbbing pain was beginning to dull.
"What happened?"
"Praise Ockrim!" Batrire shouted. "I can understand him!"
Her words hurt for some reason, and as Max started to stir, a hand pushed against his chest.
"Wait… just wait."
Like a calming balm, Tanila's words soothed the discomfort that he felt.
Are you okay?
His mind heard the voice and the concern and then realized it wasn't the normal tone Bob had.
Blinking again, he took a deep breath and tasted the sulfur and acidic scent he recognized.
"Rakonath?"
I am here. Your friends are here. Why does your voice sound different now?
Finally his eyes worked as he felt a sensation of something fixing run through them.
[Regeneration Expired]
Turning his head, he saw that he was on the ground in the lava-filled area, Fowl looking anxiously at Rakonath, who was towering over him, her humanoid form making his dwarven friend look smaller than usual.
"You are awake. This is good. Tell me, Max, what had the power to do this to you?"
Unable to stop the groan as he sat up, the spinning sensation that came with that motion made him slow down his original intent.
"I'm not sure yet… the shard… I think it exploded. Anyone?"

“Bah, you’re telling me you couldn’t see what happened?” Fowl asked, both eyes widening as he watched him rise. “The whole room lit up like a bonfire or one of those spells Tanila casts! Then the next moment you shouted for us to come close, and as we were brought here, I was certain all my hair would be burnt off.”
A hand appeared by his side, and Max saw Cordellia holding it out for him. Using it, he smiled at her.
“Shorty is right,” their ranger said. “For a moment… I was certain we might not make it out of there. And then the next thing we know this… dragon woman came at us, followed by the dragon you told us about. Neither were happy about the state you were in.”
Finally able to stand without feeling like he was going to fall over, Max summoned a chair and set it down, plopping onto it, and took a few deep breaths.
“Give me a minute. Let me see if I can figure out what happened.”
Bob?
A pain came through their connection. Hurt and something else.
Are you okay?
Yes… like you… I am hurting. Give me a minute as well. We need to talk .

36 Chapter 365 - Introducing Rakonath

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2082890/chapter-365-introducing-rakonath;[2025-02-21 15:03]

Chapter 365 - Introducing Rakonath

“I’m going to need a minute,” Max said as he pulled a flask from his storage and started to drink it all. After wiping his mouth, he put the empty container away and could feel some anxiousness coming from the silver dragon that waited patiently just a few feet away.
“It appears you have grown some, Rakonath. Do you mind coming to me so that—”
Before his words were finished, the dragon, which had gained over a foot in height, bolted, stopping just before he barreled over Max and put his head on both legs.
Laughing, Max began to scratch the scales he knew his dragon wanted him to touch, enjoying the trill that came as his fingers moved along both sides of the silver-scaled jaw and finally up to the top of his head.
A few chuckles came from his companion, and Max saw Tanila looking at him, her head cocked sideways and the slightest smile displayed on her lips.
“Would you mind if she gives you a few scratches?” he asked.
Rakonath turned his head slowly, doing what appeared to be his best to keep at least one of Max’s hands on him.
She is your mate. I am fine with that.
“How… I mean… Aerthen, when did he get smart?”
Laughter came from the giant of a woman, and she grinned.
“Unlike your children, dragons grow much smarter when in the presence of another one. It is a weird bond we share… he picks up on what I know and try to teach rather quickly. Still… he is smarter than I could have imagined.”
Why do you ask her? I am right here.
Scratching with a little extra vigor, Max snorted and shrugged.
“Sorry… I’m new to all this but forgive me, Rakonath. You are right… Tanila is my… mate.”
Both Fowl and Cordellia started to laugh, and Max could see his words had caused his *mate* to turn red, not from embarrassment.
“Your mate… Perhaps I should look elsewhere if that is to be my title,” Tanila stated as she moved to the pair.

“Forgive me. I was simply using the word he had used. Still if you want, you are welcome to scratch his scales. Rakonath has said you can do so because you are my… partner.”
The only response he got from her was a raised eyebrow. Then her hand moved slowly until her nails came in contact with a few scales along the back of the young dragon’s jaw. As she moved them deftly, the trill came again, causing their mage to smile.
I am ready. We need to talk. Now.
Grunting, Max sat up in the chair, shifting Rakonath’s head slightly.
“Give me a few. I’m not sure how long I may need, but hopefully I’ll have the answers we’re looking for in a couple.”
The other inside you. He is talking to you.
“You can hear that?” Max asked, his voice having risen slightly.
No… I can… sense it.
Trying to figure out how that might work down the road, Max bobbed his head once and took a deep breath, closed his eyes, and tried to relax.
Alright, Bob. Tell me what happened.
It felt like inside his brain his skill did the same thing, preparing itself for whatever news was about to come.
Max, I need you first to understand that there is still much I cannot remember. A part of me remains locked behind a wall; no matter what I attempt to do, I cannot break it down or get past it. In time, I am certain the only way it will ever fully unlock is when we gain enough power for me to evolve again.
There are a few things that I didn’t consider until recently. I’ll return to them, as there are too many other things to deal with. The first being that someone is active on this world, and I’m not sure how aware the gods are of it.
Another god?
I believe that the elven goddess, Thuyja, somehow acquires power through different means that are not typically done within the system. I cannot be certain, but her presence came as I accessed a part of that shard. Some alarm of some sort was set off… a trap… or perhaps a key I didn’t see that was required.
When I connected through the shard, everything was in a language I struggled to understand. It was coded… or perhaps it was concealed almost through magic. Had you not possessed the Omnilingualism skill that you do, I doubt I could have overcome that initial barrier.
Bob paused for a moment, and Max could sense something that felt like a shudder, almost as if someone had walked over their grave came through their bond.
There was so much there, it was overwhelming. All over the system is a tiny thread that seems to be spread like a web, and when I touched it, my presence was sent out. Before whatever command came that was intended to destroy me and thus you in the process arrived, I learned a few things. For at least a thousand years, this world has been a point in that web. I found lists of names of people from your world. Each had different colors and other marks listed next to them I couldn’t discern in the time I had. One I recognized only because you know it. A Henry Mythos. He was from your town.
Max immediately knew the person Bob had just named. It had been years before his Choosing Day, but that teen had been declared unskilled. His parents had caused a problem at that declaration, and now that he thought about it, they all disappeared not long after.
So they track each person that was taken? Just how many are we talking about?
Thousands. Tens of thousands.
Neither said a word, and Max was grateful he was sitting, the presence of Rakonath a comfort as the dragon’s head was still on his lap.

Every village… every town… each year.
Silence seemed to stretch in the expanse of his mind, and yet Max knew it was nothing but seconds.
Do… do you think Ockrim and Phaius know about it?
I doubt that highly, but it would also point to the reason both of them are possibly scared or anxious of her presence. While I don't remember all the things about gods and power, I can imagine that such a thing as this would give Thuyja a way to get stronger faster.
Tanila doesn't appear to know about this, and I'm assuming that her parents have only given her small bits of knowledge, preparing her and her siblings for potentially becoming like the one that we faced?
A chuckle that felt so oddly out of place in that moment came from Bob.
Your mind is quicker than I had expected. She most likely does not know the truth behind what she was raised under. The house in which she grew breeds those who are hungry for power and are willing to do whatever it takes to acquire it. If the elven woman we faced is a sign of the kind of power one might have from serving this goddess… Tanila's father might be more powerful than we imagined.
Max's hand froze, having been gently scratching Rakonath's scales, causing the dragon to move its head.
I can sense your concern over something. Do not worry; I am here.
A calm that felt oddly out of place seemed to transfer between the simple touch they shared.
"Thank you," Max whispered, eyes still closed as he began to scratch again.
That isn't a fight we might be ready for… Still, now what? Does Thuyja know it was us? Is she going to be hunting us?
I doubt she will know what happened as I created a back loop on the power that was sent to injure or kill me. The attack was more of a spell meant to overload us and provide time for someone to come to where we were. She may not be aware that you have captured the elf that we did. All this points to a god who will know something has happened in a world they take part in.
So we're running out of time. Why does it feel like so many threads are suddenly falling apart?
Bob was silent, and the seconds ticked on, half a dozen turning into almost twenty, and finally his skill answered him.
Max, we are becoming a light that cannot be hidden. You knew this would happen, and I told you that such a thing always takes place. Eventually, we will have to fight for the power you desire to have. We cannot win a fight against a god, but there are things we can do to help protect us from those fights.
Staying on the move… not being tied down.
Correct. The skills you picked up will provide you with the ability to avoid that conflict. Provided you keep yourself safe and do not allow yourself to be caught off guard, we should be able to always flee. While it does not fit the person you are, the tower and those fights defending the city taught you that sometimes you must run.
So what do I tell the others? Can I tell them that a god has been abusing this world? That we have—
Max's mind suddenly connected a few dots that he hadn't considered until that thought.
The shard… you destroyed it!
A maniacal laughter came from his skill, and a sense of pride was present all at the same time.
I did. The very spell used to subdue me turned into the catalyst to create a feedback that looped until the shard imploded. Unfortunately I had to stay there, using every skill you have in a different way to let it grow stronger

before adding my own power to it. When I disconnected and gathered your friends, the power was too much for that small shard to contain.
If one was to revisit the area we were in, I doubt they would find that city at all.
You mean it's been destroyed?
And probably a large section of the land near it. You might hope that your driver, Blake, is still alive. I'm not certain the extent of the damage done, but anyone in that area is gone, including those who were in the cells.
Max frowned, frustrated at knowing a few more people died and that he couldn't save them.
So now what? We consider this path done?
I would stay here a few days. Allow your travel skill to give us a chance to return to the capital and inform your friends of what has happened. Then we start the next journey and head to the dwarven capital. It is not hard to see those two hairy people are anxious to return.
You've changed so much. For a moment it almost appears like you like them.
Bob gave off a sense of contentment.
Max Hoste, you have allowed me to become something I know I was most likely never meant to be. That is another conversation for another day. For now, know that those you love and consider family are under my protection. Anything that I must do, I will.
That… that means a lot. Thank you, Bob.
A sensation of a snort came through their bond.
That name… one day I will find a different one. Perhaps Seth might work.
Max couldn't help it when he burst into laughter, his eyes opened, and he saw the looks everyone was giving him.
"Sorry… inside joke. Let's get a table, chairs, and some food. We need to have a talk."
//Links

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/95231/prestige-grinding-i-can-reset-my-level-litrpg

37 Chapter 366 - The Hardest Leadership Lesson

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2084557/chapter-366-the-hardest-leadership-lesson;[2025-02-23 15:02]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 366 - The Hardest Leadership Lesson

"Fowl was right," Batrire said as she spat on the ground. "That's a load of ogre crap."
Rakonath was asleep next to Max, his body on one side, tail wrapped around the legs of the human he was bonded to. On the other side sat Tanila, her hands gripping the metal cup she held tightly. Each finger was turning white from the force she was exerting, and the metal appeared to be losing the fight as a few indentations had appeared.
"That is disturbing news," Aerthen stated as she frowned. Her eyes were sparkling as she watched Tanila. "To know a god has done such things to people… it makes me understand why so many of my kind dislike dealing with all of your races."

“It’s not our fault,” Cordellia replied, almost yelling out her response. “We didn’t know.”
A snort came from the owner of the cave they were relaxing in, surrounded by the same barrier Max had first experienced. While the lava flowed and waves of heat filled the cavern, none of them suffered any of its effects, protected by the spell Aerthen had stated was a trivial ability.
“I am not saying you are to blame, child, but just know that often you carry out the wishes of others without being aware of the destruction you cause. Does a child who is sent outside to toss seeds in a field know what the one who asked them to do intends? Are they aware if those seeds will cause a plant good enough to eat to grow or if it will instead turn into a weed that will destroy food for many? Who does one blame? The child or the one who sends them?”
Their ranger started to reply and then stopped herself, closing her open mouth with a grunt.
“If the other gods don’t know, can we tell them?” Fowl asked.
“I don’t know,” Max replied. “The last time I encountered both gods, they were anxious about Thuyja arriving. With her base or whatever we want to call that was blown up like I believe it was, I would expect her to be paying more attention to this world. Even more so since her person in charge of it is missing.”
“What are you going to do with her?”
Max and the others turned toward Tanila, who had almost crushed her cup completely, both sides folded in on each other.
“What do you mean?” Max asked.
She turned her head slowly, those green eyes almost seeming to radiate with energy.
“Do we kill her? Do we torture her? All of us know we cannot set her free.”
He shrugged, only able to sigh as she held his gaze.
“I’m not a murderer. I… I ordered someone else to dispense justice on a different world, and it still eats at me. Part of me hates myself for not being strong enough to do what I knew needed to be done. The other part of me hates that I had to do it. Still there is another side of me that knows I must do something with the elf I have captured and her companions.”
Why is it so hard to kill them if they deserve it? Aerthen has been very specific about my need to kill anyone who threatens myself or you. Do I need to kill them for you?
Hearing Rakonath speak suddenly after wondering if the dragon was actually asleep or dozing made him smile slightly.
Bending over just a little, he scratched the side of his back, a soft trill coming from the majestic silver dragon.
“Perhaps I should take lessons from you,” Max told their host. “He said you have already taught him the need to put down anyone who threatens him or me.”
A chuckle came from the dragon, her red hair bouncing as her large frame heaved from the growing bellows that came from her mouth.
Aerthen shook her head after laughing for a few seconds, and then both golden eyes locked on to him.
“That lesson cannot be taught to one of your kind so easily at your age. Dragons are often alone. Very few have a mate on this world, and that means every moment we must be prepared to defend ourselves from anyone and anything.”
She paused, leaning against the wooden table Fowl had *borrowed* from the Faction, her oversized hands pressing against it as she towered over it.
“Do not mistake my acceptance of you and your friends as some kind of kindness I share with anyone else. Had I not sensed the mark on you, I would have attacked you long before words were ever shared. Even your friends appearing as they did almost had me react, but again, that mark you bear is like the sun now, and I cannot miss it.”
She pointed a thick finger at Rakonath’s head as the young dragon sat up, his snout facing her.

“He must learn that until he is strong enough to defend himself against various threats, there is no room for mercy. Caution is everything. If he trusts the wrong person and gets too close, they can end his life in a moment.”
A huff came from the silver nostrils, and a few pieces of mucus flew out, almost landing on Fowl’s cup.
“Hey! My ale!”
Even after that fun outburst the mood at the table felt heavy. Max could sense the acknowledgment of his healer, ranger and mage.
“I… I’ve never been that person. Even now I don’t want to become… a monster.”
“Am I a monster for protecting myself and the eggling you left me with?” Aerthen asked as she leaned back in her stone chair, folding her arms and frowning.
“No… just… inside me has been a war… a desire to kill and consume anyone and everything. To grow stronger by doing so. Only now do I finally start to see the pain of being strong and trying to forge a course in a different direction. The expectations people have are difficult to carry. Even worse is what I know I put on myself.”
He sensed Tanila’s hand long before it touched him, and when she squeezed his forearm, he took a deep breath and let it out.
“You’re not alone. We’ve said it countless times,” she informed him. “Aerthen is right. Just because you do what must be done doesn’t make you a monster. Even I… I had to see that my father was right. The day I did what I did to that assassin was the day I committed myself to do whatever it took to keep you safe.”
Her words broke his heart as Max saw how her face looked absolutely calm. No emotion, no twitch, not a single muscle moved that gave any clue she might be holding back.
It’s almost like she is just reading off a baking recipe…
That is because she is completely committed to you even when it’s not a life and death situation. In the heat of battle, you are the monster. When that rage wears off, your conviction fades, and you struggle. She does not. Being a princess taught her a long time ago the lesson you are still learning.
“She’s right,” Batrire said quietly, spinning her mug in her hand on the table a few times. “After I almost died and you saved me, I knew I would do whatever I had to in order to keep you safe. Once I finally worked through all those fears, all those moments where I couldn’t wait until the last minute and ask *what if* , I told Fowl that if push came to shove, I would kill my own kind for you.”
A tear started to form in Max’s eye, and he reached up, feeling the moisture that seemed so foreign in a place surrounded by flames and lava.
“Max…”
He turned to see Cordellia frowning at him after having said his name.
“I… I had nothing before you all. Sure I had the Faction, but my groups were splintered, broken, and no one really was willing to put their life on the line for others. That is why I struggled to commit at first. Part of me wondered if the four of you would leave me behind to die if things got too bad. And then…”
She sniffed, using her thumb to catch the tear that had escaped.
“You did what only you can do. Every day you told me not just in words that I was worthy of protecting and that I was family. Not once did I ever sense you would discard me as others might. For that reason I, too, would gladly kill any elf, human, or dwarf that threatens my family.”
Tanila’s hand squeezed harder on his arm, and Max saw Fowl simply nodding, his gaze fixed on the mug in his hands. Only his Sonar skill allowed him to feel the tears that ran into the dwarf’s beard.
He took a deep breath and let it out slowly. It took two more before he could finally speak, the words he wanted to say, held back by a wall he had erected since the start of all this.
“I… Thank you,” he whispered. “Thank you for telling me this. You’re all right. Even Bob.”

A collective chuckle came as he grinned, breaking the tension that was so thick one could almost cut it with a knife.
Bobbing his head, Max squeezed Tanila's hand with his and then freed it from his forearm and started to stand.
"It's time for me to do what I need to."
No one said a word as his chair made some noise moving across the hard rock of the cavern, and after pushing it back in, he gave Rakonath's head a scratch as the dragon turned to follow him.
"Stay here. You can watch, but I don't want you to get close."
I understand.
Taking a few steps, Max readied himself, hardening his expression, a frown forming as he committed to what was coming next.
"Aerthen, are you willing to dispose of a few bodies?"
The stone chair the red dragon was sitting on grated against the floor as she stood.
"For you I can either let you put them in the lava, or you can allow Rakonath to eat them. It would do him good to have a fresh kill."
It took great effort to hold back the shudder that wanted to run through his body.
That... seems almost worse than what I had imagined.
Does it? You had originally thought she might eat them. Why would it matter which of them does it? Remember the conviction they are talking about. That eggling needs to grow, and you are providing for him nothing more than a meal. It would be the same as if you brought a cow or sheep and gave it to him.
But they're—
Simply meat. Beings which have chosen the wrong side. In a battle, do armies care if the birds eat the dead of those they faced? Does the general feel bad that the wolves or other animals come and pick clean the bones of those who they struck down? No. You must be the same. Everything that stands against you must make not just you but your new companion stronger. I'm not sure how it works for them, but Aerthen would not say this unless there was a reason.
The purple door appeared as Max used his skill.
[Dimensional Space]
"Rakonath, I'll bring them back so you can eat them."
Thank you for helping me grow stronger, Max.
Hearing those words strummed a cord inside him. The reminder that only in death had he grown stronger. Bob was right, and he knew it. A year had passed, and so many had died to his hands. Each death was a step to becoming strong enough to protect those around that table. To protect his family back at the Faction house.
As the purple door started to swing open, Max smiled.
Thank you for your friendship and advice. I can't promise I'll do everything right, but I'll try to make sure to not repeat these mistakes.
Through his bond Max felt a small chuckle coming from Bob.
Now is the moment your enemies will learn to fear you, Max. When a man is committed as I feel you are right now, they shall learn to way the costs of going against you.
As the door finished opening and light flooded the room of the space he controlled, a body rushed toward the opening, and Max had his weapon out and pointed toward the opening.
"You've made a mistake," he growled.
//Links

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/95231/prestige-grinding-i-can-reset-my-level-litrpg

38 Chapter 367 - Doing What He Must https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2086491/chapter-367-doing-what-he-must;[2025-02-24 15:02]

Chapter 367 - Doing What He Must

The elven warrior that had been his problem since returning to Tanila and the others face-planted against an invisible barrier, getting knocked back a few steps.

A small dagger fell to the ground, and Max realized he and his friends had missed it, having not searched them like he would have, simply trusting that they had done a better job.

Behind the elf were the other two, all prepared to rush at him, frozen in their steps as he stood there, a smirk now on his face.

“It would appear you didn’t want an easy death,” Max stated as he stored his weapon. “You should have listened to my warning.”

As he moved to where the invisible barrier was that had stopped the elf’s escape, Max wondered what else he needed to learn about this place.

I wasn’t aware that would happen. Were you?

No… I believe since it is your dimensional storage, you control access. This means that it might be a very effective prison because unless you allow it, they will never be able to escape.

As Max stepped through, the elf came at him.

He wanted to laugh as the elf attacked without a weapon. His captive threw a jab toward his face. As the punch came, the elf warrior drove the same leg forward, preparing a short kick to his knee.

His mind recognized the style as the one he had picked up from killing Terrance, and while the attack seemed fluid and better prepared than what he knew how to do, the difference between their stats was too much.

His hand caught the punch, and his foot came up, blocking the kick and shattering the elf’s shin with ease.

Squeezing, his fist broke bones, causing them to come through the skin, and the scream that started to come was cut off as Max freed his grip from the paste of a limb and caught the elf’s neck. His other first pummeled the shoulder joints shattering each. Hanging by his hand, the loyal follower of the woman he needed to kill struggled as each blow came faster than most could ever hope to even catch a glimpse of. Finally, when done with his need to cause the elf to suffer, a simple move snapped his prisoner’s neck.

Notifications flew by, but he ignored them.

With a simple flick of his arm, Max tossed the corpse behind him and out the door.

His Sonar skill revealed to him that Rakonath had come close to the portal, now sniffing the corpse, drool forming as the dragon prepared to take a bite.

The other two elves were frozen, not moving. He wondered if they were trying to comprehend what had just happened or the sight that was obviously behind him.

Not giving either elf a chance, he repeated the action, tossing two more bodies out the storage, and moved closer to the woman they had referred to as a *queen* , seeing her still bound and pressed against the back wall, her dull gold eyes trembling slightly.

“I’m going to have a conversation with you. You won’t like it, but I promise you will die. The only question will be how much pain you are willing to endure.”

***

As the door shut behind him and the lightstone cast an eerie set of shadows, Max bent down, looking directly into the elf’s eyes.

“The death I’m going to give you is deserved because of all the humans I can only begin to imagine you have killed,” he growled. “Your only hope is that you tell me something to stop the endless healing I’m going to give you.”

He held up a green potion. Its deep emerald color glowed as the lightstone at his feet shined light into it from underneath.
“Terrance… Do you know that name? The older human who captured ones like me? You should know he tried to hold back, but it’s amazing how much someone will tell as you pull a bone from their leg and then heal them to replace it.”
“Te… Terrance? Impossible! He—”
Max backhanded her, splitting the lip he struck and causing it to run red.
“I didn’t permit you to speak yet. When I’m done talking, I’ll let you know. Until then I’d think twice about doing so again.”
She glared back at him, eyes radiating more than they had a moment ago.
“Now then. What should I call you?”
A few seconds of silence stretched on, and Max shook his head as he frowned. A glass dagger appeared in his other hand, and using his Sand Mastery skill it began to float in the air next to him.
“Now is when you should start talking.”
He could see the twitch in her right eye. The simple display of power was meant as a reminder that he was a god here in this space.
“You are not worthy—”
The sound of his hand striking her again seemed louder in that space, and more blood flowed from the injury he had inflicted with the first strike.
“Trust me. This isn’t the path you want to go.”
She shifted in her bonds, the rope still holding her fast, though there were a few marks he could detect where the elf must have tried to cut it.
A scowl formed on the woman, and his heart for the briefest moment sank as he knew this was going to not be easy.
This is the time you prove the words you spoke. Unlike all the other times, I will not do this for you. It is time for you to grow and become strong like you have said you always needed to be. Remember, Max, strength isn’t always might. Sometimes it is the will that forces a person to do what must be done. No matter what.
Taking a deep breath, Max began to pull different items from his storage and set them on the stone floor.
“I guess we’ll see how strong your commitment to Thuyja really is.”
***
Her breathing returned to normal as the potion took effect again and he nodded at her.
“So, Riniya, that didn’t seem too hard.”
The amount of sweat that covered her in a room that seemed to adjust to the temperature in his mind was pleasant, and while no breeze was present, her body had poured out buckets of liquid.
Blood seemed to vanish from the floor as it ran free, and he was glad there wouldn’t be a mess to clean up. The wounds on her body looked like they had never existed, and Max knew that the moment his hand gripped the bone and her eyes had changed, she was finally broken.
Next to him was a bag filled with dozens of toes and fingers, all having been regrown, as well as a few ears.
“I can imagine you’ve done far worse to my people during the time you carried out Thuyja’s orders. Those elixirs… How long has the elven royalty been getting them from you?”
Her body trembled and shook, and Max’s Sonar had learned to tell when she was trying to lie and whatever bond gripped her heart was in control.
Each breath was labored, and Riniya’s chest fought against the bounds that hold her, constricting the movement that seemed unable to expand as much as she desired.
“I… can’t… give a… number!” she got out, the words barely making it between gasps.
Nodding, Max knew how this worked.
“Fine. Nod as I give you some choices.”

“Three hundred?”
Short, quick bobs came as she struggled to breathe.
“Five hundred?”
“Seven hundred?”
“Eight hundred?”
He paused as her head moved up and down each time for the briefest moment.
“A thousand?” Max asked.
Gasping, she nodded, and he frowned.
“Eleven hundred?”
For the first time her head shook no, and it sent her body into spasms.
You were right… a thousand years. What kind of power can they have gained in that time?
For the elven line to be involved so long makes me wonder a few things. The potential for power and growth is exponential, and for a moment I thought that perhaps one could have an unlimited amount of skills. Yet if what she says is true… we are looking at a change that needs to take place.
Still… that explains why my stats hitting one thousand in each hasn’t triggered the bonuses we should expect. So the system requires one’s body to go through an actual amount of change in the tower.
Riniya’s breathing returned to normal as he stood there, arms crossed, watching her. He could see the way she studied him. The knowledge that he had a black skill had caused the woman to pee herself.
When he told her that both Ockrim and Phaius knew of the skill, it had helped her overcome some of the spell that held her back, but like always, the need to inflict pain that was worse than whatever the spell caused was required.
So she’s cleared a tower on a different world, and that allowed her to have the skills she did. Still there is a limit, she says. But we don’t have a limit? What about the other two black skills?
They are like me in some ways. Different and yet similar. We should anticipate their… *host* to have a strength similar to ours and multiple skills when we meet. Even if a blind hunger consumes them, they will be smart enough to find ways to gain more skills, and their abilities will allow them the opportunity to do so.
We can discuss this later… for now, you need to end this. We both know her body is on the verge of giving out. You can sense the way her heart is skipping now… beats are missing, and in this place not even the potion can heal whatever damage is being done to her.
Which means one or two more questions… the problem is which ones? Surely she won’t know Thuyja’s true plans. Her answers earlier show that she simply obeys and transports those elixirs to the world she has been ordered to. We can’t access it without freeing her and letting her attempt such a thing, and we both know that would be a foolish gamble.
You mean you don’t want to suddenly be in Thuyja’s presence?
His audible chuckle caused Riniya to flinch. The number of times she endured pain after he laughed had apparently conditioned her to that reaction.
Even if I doubt she would kill us, we both know that wouldn’t be a situation we want to stumble into. I can’t flee with my Planetary Travel for another month. We’d be trapped, and I’m certain that elf has ways to make us suffer.
So then what are you thinking?
Only the sound of Riniya’s breathing filled the room, and Max could only frown as he considered that question. And then it hit him.
“Riniya, I’m going to end this if you can answer my next two questions truthfully. Remember,” Max said as he motioned to the bag on the floor, “I’m able to detect those lies, and I’d rather be done with all this. None of this brings me joy.”
She bobbed her head, eyes trembling slightly, and he wasn’t sure if the hope of all this being over was why.
“What is something I need to know about the tower? What is the final floor like?”

She groaned, her back arching, fighting against the ropes that bound her. Thrashing like an animal with a paw caught in a trap, Max was surprised at how much she resisted that question.
Something is wrong. Her heart. It’s racing beyond belief!
Max knew Bob was right, sensing the change that was far worse than before.
Her mouth opened, and no words came out, a breath that was stuck in the lump in her throat.
“It’s… a fight… against…!”
The scream reply bounced off the wall, and Max’s hands moved with a speed that he hoped wasn’t too late.
Her neck snapped, and yet her heart was beating the last beat as it happened.
For a moment in that room, the ringing of her outburst was all he could hear, and that second between his action and her body giving out lasted forever.
Then the chill that he longed for came, and Max stumbled forward, unable to catch himself as he smacked his head against the wall of his dimensional storage.

39 Chapter 368 - Gaining Skills

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2088701/chapter-368-gaining-skills;[2025-02-27 12:39]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 368 - Gaining Skills
[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]
[Skill does not match Racial Type]
[Consume is unable to convert Skill]
[Power stored for future use]
[Consume has Consumed a Higher Rank Skill]
[Butaru - Rare has been upgraded to Butaru - Epic]
[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]
[Skill is lower rank than current skill]
[Power stored for future use]
[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]
[Skill is lower rank than current skill]
[Power stored for future use]
[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]
[Skill is lower rank than current skill]
[Power stored for future use]
[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]
[Skill does not match Racial Type]
[Consume is unable to convert Skill]
[Power stored for future use]
[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]
[Skill is lower rank than current skill]
[Power stored for future use]
[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]
[Skill is lower rank than current skill]
[Power stored for future use]
[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]
[Skill is lower rank than current skill]
[Power stored for future use]
[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]

[Skill does not match Racial Type]
[Consume is unable to convert Skill]
[Power stored for future use]
[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]
[Skill is lower rank than current skill]
[Power stored for future use]
[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]
[Skill is lower rank than current skill]
[Power stored for future use]
[Consume has Successfully Consumed a Skill]
[Skill is lower rank than current skill]
[Power stored for future use]
[Consume has Consumed multiple Racial Skills]
[Consume is attempting to convert Skills]
[Consume is unable to convert Skill]
[Consume is unable to convert Skill]
[Consume is unable to convert Skill]
[Consume has partially successfully converted a Skill]
[Consume is attempting to convert fully]
[…]
[…]
[Consume has modified skill for growth and potential unlocking]
[Consume has gained 20% of Racial Skill - Bloodline]
[Consume has Consumed a Higher Rank Skill]
[Butaru - Epic has been upgraded to Butaru - Legendary]
[Consume has Consumed a Higher Rank Skill]
[Dual Wield - Epic has been upgraded to Dual Wield - Legendary]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Would you like to learn [Wind Control]?]
[Yes / No]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Skill type is too similar to current skill]
[Converting new skill]
[Harden Body has been upgraded from Epic to Legendary]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Skill Consumed is Equal to Rank of Current Skill]
[Power stored for future use]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Skill Consumed is Equal to Rank of Current Skill]
[Power stored for future use]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Would you like to learn [8uajaXXy….]
[Attack on Consume Detected]
[Attempting to Block Attack]
[…]
[…]
[…]
[…]
[…]
[Secondary Attack Detected]
[Skill Deletion Attempt Underway]
[Consume is Attempting to -]
[…]
[…]
[Secondary Attack Prevented]
[Primary Attack requires deletion of Skill]
[Cosmic Tracer detected in Skill]

[Skill Purged by Consume]
[Consume Scanning Other Skills]
[No other Tracer detected]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Skill Consumed is Equal to Rank of Current Skill]
[Power stored for future use]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Skill Consumed is Equal to Rank of Current Skill]
[Power stored for future use]
[Status Check]
*****
Max Hoste
19-Year-Old Human Male
Level 1
Exp 438/1000
Tower Experience: 51.68%
STR: 1123+1802
DEX: 1101+1752
CON: 1047+1695
INT: 1018+1600
WIS: 1005+1582
Defense of the Dragon - 25%
Defense of the Demon - 25%
Demon Essence: - 1682
World Champion: - 20% Stat Increase
Bloodline: - 20% of the required 100% unlocked
Skills:
Baking Common
Consume Legendary
Shield Epic
Berserker Epic
Elemental Mastery Legendary
Stealth Epic
Dual Wield Legendary
Sonar Epic
Melee Weapon Mastery Legendary
Power Strike Legendary
Backstab Epic
Evasion Epic
Haste Uncommon
Festering Touch Common
Death Magic Rare
Conceal Self Epic
Regeneration Epic
Armored Warrior Epic
Intimidation Legendary
Bulwark Epic
Dark Magic Rare
Poison Making Uncommon
Trap Detection Uncommon
Rampage Epic
Weakness Rare
Demonic Magic Rare
Demonic Summoning Rare
Demonic Teleportation Epic
Weapon Crafting Legendary
Armor Crafting Epic

Magical Strike Rare
Formidable Mind Epic
Ice Resistance Rare
Poison Immunity Legendary
Ranged Mastery Legendary
Empowered Ranged Attack Epic
Engineering & Tinkering Mastery Epic
Power Core Crafting Epic
Negate Death Blow Legendary
Alchemy Epic
Magical and Power Core Infused Weapon Creation Epic
Protect Ally Rare
Fire Familiar Epic
Quick Attack Epic
Acid Resistance Epic
Sand Mastery Epic
Elemental Mana Control Rare
Stone Mastery Epic
Ghost Strike Rare
Wood Mastery Rare
Harden Body Legendary
Ultimate Form Rare
Omnilingualism Legendary
Spell Burst Rare
Arrow Volley Epic
Blink Epic
Mirrored Image Epic
Phasing Epic
Dimensional Space Uncommon
System Travel - Block Rare
Dispel Rare
System Travel - Planetary Common
Planetary Travel - Waypoints Uncommon
Butaru H2H Fighting Legendary
Wind Control Legendary
*****
[Skill Description - Butaru H2H Fighting]
*****
Butaru H2H Fighting - Legendary Skill: The user has an almost perfect understanding of using fists and feet when fighting without a weapon. Their body control is only limited by their physical stats and any physical limitations. Strikes delivered can negate padded and chain armor, shattering bones if their strength is strong enough. Those of this level of training can also deflect specific melee attacks, provided the weapon they deflect has enough surface mass to palm the blade’s path safely. This often does not work against piercing weapons or swords with thin edges.
*****
[Skill Description - Wind Control]
*****
Wind Control - Legendary Skill: The user has the ability to control the very air around them. At this level of control, the caster may summon a windstorm strong enough to go against natural forces for a while. Other advanced methods of travel, including flight, can be used with this ability. Flying requires a constantly growing cost of mana. The longer one actively uses the skill for flight, the more the cost will be multiplied every minute.
*****
//Links

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/106630/beseech-the-unhallowed-path-young-master-mc-vs

40 Chapter 369 - Helping Rakonath Grow

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2090805/chapter-369-helping-rakonath-grow;[2025-02-27 12:40]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 369 - Helping Rakonath Grow
Max's mind throbbed as he saw the notifications.
It took a moment for the pain to dull enough to realize he was leaning against the now-lifeless corpse. Dull eyes stared at him from beyond, the glow that once had always been present gone. Riniya's braid was a mess, hair sticking out in many places, slowly turning white before him.
"Holy elf..."
He stopped himself, pushing back from the wall and rising to his feet, the room almost spinning as he did.
We... are fortunate this happened here. I'm unsure if I could have deleted that tracker attached to a skill. Someone, most likely Thuyja, appears to closely monitor their minions.
Minions... as if Riniya was nothing more than an ordinary elf.
The power she had is nothing compared to a god, as you yourself witnessed the same truth about how you stack up to one while in the presence of Phaius and Ockrim. If either of them control you, the same title of *minion* would be correct, no matter how powerful you are compared to anyone else around you.
Max knew Bob was right, yet the idea of such a thing being possible made his already swirling mind suffer even more.
What is this effect? Are you hurt?
Not much. In time, we should be fine. That elf had a few traps inside her that I'm not certain she might have been fully aware of. Had I not been able to do what I did... she might have exploded.
He could feel both of his eyes widen, his vision locked upon the tied-up corpse.
That's possible?
In the system, there are many possible things. While I'm not certain what is and what isn't typical on this world, it would appear some have gone to great lengths to prevent knowledge of what had been done from being shared. You know she died not from the bond Thuyja had on her?
Frowning, Max found his head moving up and down.
I wondered... no one talked about the last floor of the tower. She... seemed willing to try, and I could feel her heart stopping, forced to quit, not from whatever held her tongue against every other question. Riniya actually outplayed me there... by being willing to go against that. She knew she would die, didn't she?
It would appear so. That makes me wonder why the last floor of the tower is so closely guarded. What could be there that prevents anyone from talking about it? How dangerous could it really be?
Far more dangerous than I want to consider right now. The next thing I want to know is what were the racial skills you couldn't convert, and what is that bloodline?

A tremor of excitement ran through him as Bob appeared to be excited.
Each race has skills… I knew that, but I had forgotten or couldn't access that knowledge about how exact some of that might be. While I'm not able to give a list or a full breakdown of what didn't come across, there is a unique set of skills possible for each race. Riniya might have gained them from her own world, but part of me believes there must be some like this on your world.
Bloodline isn't a skill; it is a state of you, a… component of how you are made. If I deduced correctly, there lies within the royal line of elves a unique bloodline that is passed down through them. Those…
Max could sense Bob trying to think how to word something as his skill paused momentarily.
Think about the sand you control now. All those little pieces are unique, and yet the same. Still, some of the sand you can access here is different than the sand in the world we were imprisoned in. While both materials are technically both called *sand,* they have different makeups. Had you taken some from those beach tower floors, I'm certain the knives you make would be a different color than the ones you have now.
He took a deep breath and let it out after Bob finished explaining.
So even though Tanila and Cordellia both bleed the same color of blood, the elf that I love has a different kind running through her… And that bloodline skill. If we get it to 100%, will change what is inside me?
A chuckle reverberated inside his mind.
It has already begun to change you, yet you don't remember. When all the pain hit and you struck your head against the wall, did you not feel the burning sensation inside?
Bob's statement tickled a thought in his memory, and closing his eyes, Max could reach out to it and found that he could draw it close. When he did, there was that moment he had overlooked, the pain and danger of the skills he had absorbed being the most important thing at that moment.
Yes… right there. Remember how your blood boiled, and yet your body didn't fight to remove it like it would a poison? That is because your very flesh, bones, and core are starting to change. The next problem comes from how you will get that last 80%.
Both eyes flew open, and Max knew exactly what his skill was thinking.
The elves… the royal family. Tell me—
For you to finish that and evolve, you might have to do such a thing. In time you'll need to talk with Tanila and tell her what has happened. For now, we need to inspect the corpse. Something tells me we're about to be upset.
Looking down at Riniya and the places in her armor that he had made holes, Max knew what Bob was talking about.
I have three stones for unbinding things. I guess we can try to see if any of them work.
His skill chuckled again inside his head as Max got to work unraveling the rope he had secured the elf with.
You don't make me feel any better about my chances.
That is because something tells me we're not dealing with items we're used to. It's like the weapon you made on the other world. Even in death, I doubt most could have taken that from you.
Frowning, Max continued the chore of spooling the rope as he used a foot to keep the body in place as it rolled over and over, each tug of the cord that had bound her no longer needed to secure the dead.
***
A wave of anxiousness hit him as the door to his dimensional storage opened, and outside it was Rakonath, shifting side to side, silver eyes locked on him the moment the door swung open.
You have done it. I can sense that you have changed.

A small huff escaped Max's mouth as he stepped out of the space and back onto the cavern's stone floor, seeing everyone had risen from their chairs.
"He did it," Fowl whispered.
"I did," Max said, watching his dwarven friend frown before giving him the middle finger.
"Sometimes I forget how good your hearing is. I'm proud of you."
Those words seemed wrong, but everyone around the table seemed to convey the same thing by wearing tight smiles, most of their heads bobbing slightly.
"One of the hardest lessons a fighter must learn, regardless of race or creature, is that killing is required," Aerthen stated, giving the table a smack with her open palm. "You appear to have learned this lesson and now stand ready for the next."
Cocking his head to the side slightly, Max shifted his feet, the large purple door shutting behind him and sealing the dimensional storage he had been in.
"What lesson is that?"
"Not losing sleep over your actions," she replied. "A decision was made. Right or wrong, you must own it. If you allow yourself to fester and wonder if what you did was the right move, it will cause you to falter and lose the very thing you just overcame. Nothing is worse than second-guessing every action you make."
"Hear, hear!" Cordellia exclaimed.
Seeing their ranger and how she stood, chest raised slightly, her eyes scrunched slightly, made him take a moment to consider why she had made the outburst.
"The first boss in the tower."
She nodded at him after he spoke those words.
"You helped me overcome my second-guessing. After that, we made sure none of us ever dwelled upon the *what-ifs* and kept pushing forward. It might not have always been the best choice, but we are here today because we never looked back."
A grunt came from Fowl, who bobbed his head in apparent agreement.
"It would seem then that you five have already learned the value of that lesson. Take it to heart, Max Hoste," Aerthen said as she moved around the table, her long legs closing the short distance quickly as her tail dragged across the floor behind. "Now then, tell me, where is this last corpse? I would like to see it."
Grunting, Max summoned Riniya's body from his dimensional storage, but her body did not allow him to put it in his normal one. All three stones he had used had failed, dissolving as they couldn't break the bond on any of her equipment.
The elf's corpse appeared in his arms, and even though most might not have shown her dignity based on how she had treated so many humans, Max bent down and gently set the body at his feet.
"I tried to unbind her equipment, but none of the stones I had purchased worked. Even one I thought might work failed."
"You mean one of the greaters?" Tanila asked, her eyes widening a little.
He nodded and pointed at the fingers. Not a single one had a ring on it, and each one disappeared the moment he cut the finger off in his space.
"I am assuming it's inside the necklace. Every piece of jewelry vanished upon me cutting the body part it connected to. Only a bit ago did I finally remember that her swords had also vanished once she was defeated, and I had knocked them free from her hands."
A grin began to form on Aerthen's lips.
"You do not know how good of a thing this is!" she exclaimed, snapping her large finger at Rakonath. "Come! This is how you shall grow stronger!"
Max started to open his mouth, and the red dragon held out her hand. The tan flesh started to turn into red scales that reflected the light of the cavern.
"No, listen and learn, Max. This is how your dragon will grow! Simple things like meat are good but for him to be able to eat items of power at such an early age is… something that makes me jealous. Even now, I wish to revert to my normal form and swallow her whole, but this is not my prize to claim."
Her golden eyes sparkled as Aerthen grinned, a row of white sharp teeth displayed for him to see.

“Do you now understand why dragons are fine with adventurers coming into our home?” she asked.
“The more you eat, the stronger you become.”
She nodded at his reply and pointed at the body at his feet.
“Rakonath needs to eat this elf. While you might not like it, take a look around and ask yourself, where are the other three bodies you tossed out earlier?”
Max didn’t have to scan the area. He already knew they were gone, and the salivating eggling near him, shifting from side to side, reminded him of Bob early on.
“Will he continue to desire such things the more he eats?”
Aerthen let out a bellow that reverberated in the cavern, the sound of which did not match her current body. Once she had finished her outburst, she grinned again and nodded.
“Max, you don’t realize that it takes great effort on my part to not simply eat your friends. You are easy to ignore because of the mark, yet their flesh calls to me like a siren, begging me to snatch them and grow stronger.”
He sensed Fowl and Cordellia take a slight step back, their bodies tensing as they lowered slightly.
Without bothering to look back, Aerthen sighed and waved a large-scale hand over her shoulder.
“Do not worry, little ones. You are safe because of him. Somehow though, I can sense that he knows the hunger of what is often before him. If Max can resist the urge to kill you, so can I.”
Inside his head, laughter turned into a howl, and he almost winced as Bob didn’t hold back.
She is a wise one…, and it is a good thing she is on our side. Otherwise, I would hate for us to have to kill her. Feed your dragon. We have wasted enough time.
“Rakonath, the body is yours.”
Without waiting a second longer, the silver dragon that was growing quickly came forward, his jaws opening wide, and the other four turned away as the first bite took place.
Max, however, didn’t, watching what he knew would happen many more times in the future.
//Links

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/107024/ki-horizons

41 Chapter 370 - How Rakonath Learns https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2092720/chapter-370-how-rakonath-learns;[2025-02-27 15:10]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 370 - How Rakonath Learns

So many questions swirled in his head as Max watched Rakonath dozing on the stone floor of the cavern.
After eating four elves, the dragon’s belly was bulging slightly but not near as much as Max had thought it would.
“It’s part of our nature, how we’re made,” Aerthen said as she sat on her stone chair near him. “He would struggle to eat a full-size cow, but those four are not as big as

you think they are. None of them had a lot of actual body mass, most elves being lean and all."
A chuckle came from Fowl as the dwarven warrior turned his cup slowly in his hands. When he noticed everyone looking at them, the warrior shrugged and pointed at the sleeping silver dragon.
"You'll realize we're discussing how fat elves are compared to a cow, right?"
Max grinned, as did everyone but Cordellia.
"Is he going to be okay if I only come back every week or so? Part of me feels like each time I go away, something gets cut off. Something deep inside."
The large dragon shifted, her humanoid form supported by the stone seat she sat on. She smoothed out the red dress she wore with both hands.
"A bonding is something I know little of. Even though inside me is the knowledge that comes from our Father, this is different. Each world has rules on which the bond operates, and most worlds will never see it occur. Some bonds are one-sided," Aerthen stated, frowning as she spoke. "Imagine a world where a person who bonds with a dragon can force their will and mind upon us. Every part of us becomes nothing more than some animal, broken and subservient to the wishes and demands of that individual. To know that takes place on some other world makes me fear for this little one."
She paused, frowning as she tapped her fingers together.
"Yet there are other worlds where a dragon like myself would override the mind and soul of the person it bonds with. They become nothing more than a vessel, designed to allow me power through them and obey whatever wish or command that I have. Like a king or queen, my command would be absolute, and even worse is the knowledge that some can bind thousands to their will like that.
"And then there is the one I hope you two have." She sighed. "Dragon and man, bound together on equal terms, granting each a bit of their own essence, listening and learning to the advice and wisdom the other has. That is what I hope you two will share. My only concern is how and when you two can experience such a thing."
"Because I can't stay here or keep him with me for a while?" Max asked.
Aerthen slowly nodded, her gold eyes fixed upon him.
"Part of me wonders if that is for the best, though. Each of you will experience the longing for the other. It would be like you and your friend being kept away for months, the pain of missing and the longing making those moments you are together better."
Max and Tanila glanced at the other, squeezing the hand they held.
"We have been there," their mage said quietly. "It is a pain I wish to avoid for as long as possible."
"Yet now, is your relationship better?"
"I'd like to think so," Max replied.
"Then perhaps Rakonath will be the same," Aerthen said, cracking her neck as she spoke. "He shall gain wisdom and knowledge from me, things that he will need to know in the coming days. If he were to leave with you right now, those things would be lost, most likely never learned. Instead, when the time comes, and you two can travel together, Rakonath will be better prepared for what is out there."
"What kind of knowledge does a dragon need?" Fowl asked.
"Oh, that's a simple one," she replied with a grin. "Cooking times for a dwarf is a tricky thing. Too long, and they are burnt, tasting and smelling awful, but when done just right, it's a delicacy."
Their warrior leaned back in his chair, eyes darting at the others before everyone except him burst out laughing.
"Bah, dragon nuts!"
His curse increased the noise of their outburst, finally reaching a point loud enough to make Rakonath stir for a moment. A heavy eyelid raised to see what the fuss was before closing again.
***
How long this time?

“A week, maybe two,” Max said as he scratched the ridge of Rakonath’s head. “I need to get these dwarves to their city. Even though it might not look like it, they are to be married.”

Such a foolish thing for our kind. You either choose to be one’s mate or not. No ceremony changes that. Your word is all that is required, as is your commitment.

Grinning, Max’s head bobbed as he increased the pressure of his fingers, earning a trill from his dragon.

“That is true. Tanila and I have that. Still, I look forward to the day you can be with me as I travel. For now, just grow stronger. Aerthen has promised to provide you with the best training possible.”

You have no idea the pain she already makes me endure. Even though I know the reason behind it, my body does not like how it hurts sometimes. Still… Thank you. I can sense that you are different from most of them, and Aerthen’s thoughts are hard to hide from me when I am this close. I can feel how she sees you. The very light she talks about draws me closer to you.

It is like a… thread, I believe, is what you call it. Somehow, it connects me to the one who gave you that mark in a different way. Inside me is a smaller version of it, she said. That is what has allowed me to learn so quickly from what she shares.

“How does that work?”

A grin appeared as the scales over his lips pulled upward on Rakonath’s snout.

Dragons share by touch. Each night, she draws me close and puts me under her wing. As I sleep, I learn through the dreams she creates. Some are clear, while others are blurry. Worlds… so many worlds… so many different dragons of all sorts of shapes and sizes. Some are two or three times taller than her, and others are no bigger than your head. Each, however, bears the mark of our Father. No dragon can escape the bond and connection with him.

In those moments, she creates stories that are like… ballads? Tales?

“I know what you are trying to say,” Max said, staring intently into the silver eyes that were looking back at him.

Those are how I learn. Lessons of other dragons sometimes, occasionally ones I know aren’t real stories, just simply things to pass the knowledge through. Yet as the night goes on, I am there in them, beside her, part of that moment.

“Do I ever show up in those?”

A thrum came as Rakonath’s head moved up and down slowly.

Sometimes you are a… knight! Other times a standard warrior. Each time she has shown me you, there is always an aura of power. Every dream shows you in a light of honor or respect. Know that she was honest about her hunger for your friends. Inside her is a desire that wishes to eat them. She can sense how much stronger they would make her, just like she can sense the same thirst inside you.

Max felt a shiver run through him as Bob laughed in the background of his mind at that statement.

This voice inside you… it is a part of you, and yet it is not. Are they like Aerthen is for me?

He let out a low whistle and smiled.

“That one is a longer story and not for a moment like this, but yes, he is. He will protect you and me. Do not fear him.”

There is no fear of him. Every part of you tells me that you see him as… a friend.

Unable to help himself, Max snorted and watched as Rakonath shook his head.

I’m sorry. I was afraid you might shoot mucus from your nostrils like Aerthen sometimes does when she snorts. I do not enjoy being covered in it.

This time, Max roared with laughter and felt everyone’s eyes upon him and his dragon. Glancing at Aerthen, he would have sworn he could see a confused look on her face, eyes narrowed slightly at him.

Stop that! I will get in trouble if she learns what I said. Now, then, go. I will be here, anxiously awaiting your return. Just remember, I am always happy with any food you bring me.

Max moved forward, wrapping his arms around the dragon’s neck. He felt how much Rakonath had grown in such a short time, and a thread of power came from this moment.

The silver dragon responded in kind, using its wings and neck to encircle Max as best he could.

“Be safe, and I promise to bring something back to eat.”

“Do not forget the one who trains him when you bring back food!” Aerthen called out.

“I won’t,” Max said as he moved to where his friends stood, waiting a few yards away.

“We can wait a few more days if need be,” Tanila said as he took her hand.

Shaking his head, Max frowned slightly. “It’s been far too long, and I need to check on Blake. We don’t know if he is alive. Even worse is if he is alive and the destruction is as bad as Bob fears, we might have rumors growing in the capital.”

“So check on him, then return to the capital, and then we head home?” Fowl asked.

“That’s the plan.”

Max turned to find Aerthen had moved a bit away from them, her body glowing and growing.

“HOLY DRAGON NUTS!” Cordellia cursed as the red dragon showed her true size.

Fowl coughed, nodding in agreement as the other four all gazed upon the owner of the cavern, her real power on display for them.

She roared, and Max laughed as he understood it.

“Your friends best not believe I have balls! I am not some weak male dragon!”

“They don’t!” Max shouted back. “Sadly both of them like to curse and have far too many ways of doing so.”

A thrum caused the very ground they stood on to vibrate as its tone echoed around the cavern, causing some of the falling lava to almost dance from the force it was assaulted with.

“I’ll return soon! Until then, thank you again!”

Aerthen’s head lowered slightly, and a row of teeth appeared as her lips moved away.

“Be safe, Max Hoste. Try not to cause too many problems between now and then.”

Grinning, he shrugged and beckoned to his friends.

“It’s time to go. She doesn’t like it when Cordellia accuses her of having nuts.”

“WHAT? I… I didn’t—”

Their archer stopped talking, seeing how Max was grinning, and the obvious noise of laughter from the dragon grew louder.

“Gods, I hate you,” she muttered.

“No, you don’t. You love me like the brother you wish you had but would never come over for dinner.”

At that comment, both Tanila and Cordellia started to laugh, leaving the two dwarves frowning and squinting at the pair.

“Elf jokes… never funny,” Batrire stated.

As everyone came close and put their hands on him, Max leaned backward until he could see Rakonath.

“Grow, my friend.”

Oh… I will.

//Links

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/106630/beseech-the-unhallowed-path-young-master-mc-vs

41-1 Chapter 370a – Archons

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2092741/chapter-370a-archons;[2025-02-27 15:14]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 370a – Archons

“The system is under attack in ways it should not be. What are we going to do about it?”

Four figures said nothing in response to the first, each of them feeling the flow of power that ran through them from every living creature across the system.

Strands wound together in tight cords, running into the very chairs they sat upon, the seat of their power, and also the chains that bound them.

“What has happened is not new. Many times each day these things take place, and yet you now say we should act upon it?” the third archon asked. “You only bring this up because of what it is connected to.”

“Of course that is the reason,” the male archon stated, his voice louder than before and earning him a harsh gaze from the other four.

He coughed, his appearance nothing more than a humanoid body, each of them sharing the same one, filled with lights and twinkling every moment as the system’s power coursed through their being.

“Each of you knows it is different this time. Never in so long has one been like this.”

His words caused them all to sit there silently. Time, which seemed to have no purpose in this room, passed. A thread blinked out, an entire world gone, while other threads wove together to make a strand.

“Did everyone just come to the same conclusion?” one of the female archons asked, the fourth in the row.

Heads moved slowly up and down, blank faces, no expressions given.

“Even then, the risk is so great,” the same archon who had brought up this protest continued. “How many have come, giving power back to the system to influence this thread… this strand… the very thing we all know the potential danger it represents?”

“That does not matter,” the second archon replied, glancing at the one who sat in the last seat. “We have been here so long and seen so many things. This is nothing to be concerned with. Our rules will keep things safe. The gods play their game according to them. At any time we can adjust the rules if need be.”

No more words were spoken as the other four turned their heads into the same neutral position they kept them in unless one spoke or a god came to their room.

Yet on the end, the fifth archon frowned for a moment before joining the others in their gaze across every thread they were connected to.

//Links

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/106967/blood-stained-blade-gamelit-sword-mc

42 Chapter 371 - Getting Answers https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2094750/chapter-371-getting-answers;[2025-03-03 12:01]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 371 - Getting Answers

Max stared at the crater, the only evidence of the town they had infiltrated just the other day.
No smoke rose from it.
Instead, there was an absence of all rock, dirt and anything else.
A smooth surface like glass ran down the almost-three-mile-wide bowl.
“Everyone must be dead,” Cordellia said quietly. “What… what kind of power could cause this?”
No one spoke, but Max believed each of them must be working through that problem independently.
“Can… can you do this kind of destruction?” Fowl asked.
Sensing his friend looking at him, he could only shake his head.
“No. This is far beyond me. Even with everything I have and know, moving that amount of material would take so long. I mean… how deep is this? Half a mile? Three quarters?”
“At least,” their ranger replied.
“Still… to know that Thuy—” Tanila caught herself right before she said the name she had prayed to her whole life. Clearing her throat, she grimaced. “To know that someone would unleash that kind of destruction on a town makes me question the blind loyalty I have given them.”
“It’s not your fault, dear,” Batrire said as she squeezed her friend’s arm. “No one could have imagined that she would desire this.”
“I did… I mean… the signs were there,” their mage replied. Her voice was low, the pain of the realization evident on every word she spoke. “My dad… my grandfather… they all proclaimed how our goddess wanted us to be strong. Powerful enough to go to other worlds and proclaim her might and conquer those who wouldn’t bend a knee.”
Max held her hand, feeling her whole body tremble as his Sonar detected the slightest movement she made.
“So many have died… because of her… I want to curse her name but fear doing so would draw her attention, and we…”
She paused, pulling her hand free from Max’s and pointed at the crater before them.
“The last thing I ever want to do is draw the attention of someone who would do this to the ones who follow them.”
Are you going to tell her we caused this… that I actually caused this to happen?
It can’t be all your fault… I mean surely the crystal and that attack played a role.
Perhaps… in time, though, she might calm down and ask. When she does, tell her the truth. I had no idea the destruction it would cause. The choices were limited, and I needed to get away, yet I also needed to destroy the link to this world. Had I known…
Bob stopped talking, and for the first time he could really ever remember, Max felt a thread of remorse.
We would have killed them all had they attacked us. Why is this different?
A small chuckle reverberated in his head.

You are beginning to sound like someone who has overcome their struggle against when someone must die. While you are right, I do not like how Tanila feels about this and how we are in the middle of her pain. She is struggling with anger against a god she has served her entire life. Right now, the blame for this falls upon Thuyja's shoulders. Eventually, you must tell her the truth. I must take some of the blame.

Sighing, Max frowned. No one appeared to be concerned by his action, and all of them felt the weight of this moment.

"I guess we should return to Peltagow. The tracks show Blake was headed back toward the capital, and while I'm certain we can beat his return, I'd rather not have my family think something bad has happened to me again."

A snort escaped Fowl, and Max saw his friend shaking his head.

"Unless you're planning on camping out here a few days, I'm fairly certain there is no way that man is going to be faster than your ability to travel between points."

Chuckling, Max shrugged.

"We can walk if you want."

"Gods, no," their warrior replied. "You've spoiled me, and now I expect to travel in style."

***

Everett's face had displayed a variety of emotions over the time that they had known him, yet watching the older man seemingly unable to make the pained expression on his face vanish was heartbreaking.

He never takes this long to handle whatever we tell him. Even when I shared with him what happened on the other world, Everett didn't stay like this.

That is because he is used to you achieving the impossible. Learning that the gods he believed in have been secretly killing his race for so long just to gain power has shaken him like it did Tanila. The difference is that he doesn't have you like the others do.

"Everett?"

When Tom said his name, the Faction leader turned and saw his friend smiling softly at him.

"Are you going to be okay?"

"I… I… The gods, Tom! Why didn't they protect us? How come they would allow this? I mean—"

"My only hope is that they don't know," Max said, cutting off the questions he knew were coming. "Our race was punished for the wars we created years ago. Perhaps there was a belief that some were unskilled. Maybe there really are? All I know is that we destroyed something that has been active for a long time, and I'm certain the fallout might spread across our world if we're not careful."

"Still… the queens… they knew? Had an idea?"

Everett's tone grew harsher as he asked those questions, his eyes starting to narrow and a scowl replacing the pained look that had been there.

"Perhaps," Max answered. "But even Tanila and Cordellia will tell you that each kingdom has its own way of controlling things. No one knows how long this has been going on and what kind of power is traded for by the queens and possibly nobles."

"We're not even certain if our king has a part in this," Batrire stated. "While I'd like to believe he is innocent of such a thing, perhaps he is not."

"Bah, we don't care about such things like…" Fowl stopped his outburst, the eyes of everyone in the room fixed on him. "I mean… yes, we all want power, but humans have always been known for wanting it more. Gold, gems, ale, that's what dwarves like. Humans have always been a bit more power hungry."

Max bobbed his head, seeing his friend be honest in a time when most might not say what they thought.

"Which brings me back to a point I made earlier. Our options are limited, and before we head off to your home and eventually Nalgrun, I need to see if Phaius will meet with me."

"Even though last time brought destruction upon a town?" Tom asked.

“I won’t have the skill active that caused that.”
He ignored the scoff from the older trainer and waited to see if anyone else would protest.
After a few seconds of silence, Max stood and kissed Tanila on her head before moving toward the door.
“I’ll be back as soon as possible. We can leave tomorrow.”
***
Everyone sat in silence after Max left. His change in attitude was noticeable by all.
“He’s different. More… committed,” Tom said quietly. “What happened?”
“Max realized that sometimes death is required outside of combat,” Tanila replied, her jaw tightening slightly as she spoke. “No longer should we expect him to be the person he once was. He has grown up and tossed out the idea that everyone deserves mercy and help.”
“Gods, that poor boy,” Everett muttered.
“He’s not poor for being the man he must be,” she shot back. “To long has he allowed the world to take advantage of his kindness.”
The Faction leader nodded twice and then grimaced and shook his head.
“Yes, but that kind of person is rare. We all know the person he was before. Each of us would agree he needed to grow in some ways, but to think he might have lost the part of him which drew everyone to him… makes all this seem bleak.”
“It’s still there,” Fowl declared as he banged the small table with his hand. “It’s just… buried under all the pain we see that he has endured. As warriors, we understand the fear and pain of being responsible for protecting our group. He just feels that for the entire world.”
Batrire leaned against her man and nodded.
“Do you think he’ll ever be who he once was?” Tom asked.
A sigh came from Tanila as she slowly moved the hand she had resting on her stomach.
“Only time will tell,” she answered. “In the meantime, we need to help him be who he must right now. If what I fear is coming, we’ll need him to be hard, harder than anyone else.”
“And what do you feel is coming?”
She looked at Everett and saw his eyebrow raised. He was leaning forward on his chair in her direction.
“A war… a battle… and not one most of us can probably take a part in.”
***
Max watched the steady stream of people who were entering and exiting the temple for Phaius. Unlike the one in Windsor Wheel, this one stood at least four stories tall and cast a long shadow in the fading light of the day.
All around the building, the street was packed with vendors and tables, selling different objects, shouting over each other, proclaiming that what they sold was blessed by the very god himself.
“Need a bracelet? It guarantees protection from undead?”
Max sighed and waved off the man holding a cheap copper armband.
Without missing a step, the vendor turned and approached the next person making their way toward the temple, promising it would now not only ward off the undead but also add perks in bed to an older man.
The twelve steps leading up into the temple were cut from a single piece of stone, and Max took them one at a time, eyes fixed on the pair of open doors leading inside. Columns bearing Phiaus’s likeness supported the large overhang, each created by someone skilled at working with stone. Murals depicting the god fighting, healing, protecting, and performing other acts of *godliness* were displayed.
How much money was spent on all this?
Bob scoffed in his mind.
You do not understand the power of all this. For his worshipers to believe how great of a god Phaius must be, someone must tell stories of what he has done. Those carvings will always be there, promising that perhaps he

might do the same for them. Being powerful isn't enough to have someone worship them. One must also make them believe that they care and will provide or threaten to destroy and torture if they do not.
It can't be that simple?
Oh it is not. There are many ways to gain a following of believers. You alone know that as Everett told you about those who wear those silly armbands around this city and call them disciples of *Seth Pendal* .
Idiots… all of them!
Yet an army of loyal idiots is what every leader and would-be god desires. So that they can control those people and have them carry out the instructions they are given.
Two steps remained as Max and Bob conversed, the thirty-foot doors almost touching the steps from where they were open. Each one was thicker than his hand, and the metal it was made of had more carvings and impressions of Phaius and his power.
Laughter came from children with their parents; deeper inside, he could hear someone crying, lifting up prayers to their god for healing.
Robed attendants all ushered people into the doorway, pointing them on a path that Max could now see, which led to a statue of the god, not a simple stone one, but one that was almost glowing.
Is that gold?
Perhaps the outside, but I doubt the entire thing could be so. Its weight alone would crush the floor without major magical enhancement. Still… it takes a special kind of god to have themselves depicted like that.
Max could only nod, his eyes taking in the sight before him.
In one hand, Phaius had a shield, and in the other was a sword. Each had runes and writing on it, yet he couldn't make them out. Something in his mind told him it was a real language, just one his skill couldn't yet deduce.
Flowing garments like the ones he had been wearing when they first met seemed to almost move as the lights illuminated the creation, which was at least two stories tall.
At his feet were carved images of bread, meat, and a keg of what Max assumed was alcohol.
Yet it was the eyes that tracked him as he walked.
No matter where he moved, those eyes never left him, almost as if the statue itself was alive and wanting to keep tabs on him.
"Here for a blessing or simply paying your respects?"
Max turned to see the young woman in an attendant robe he had sensed coming up on his side.
"Just here to pray and see if Phaius will reply."
She nodded and lifted her robed hand, the yellow fabric hanging loosely from her arm. A single finger extended and pointed in the direction of the area where five different metal boxes sat, each one with an attendant near it.
"Choose how much you wish to give. Just know, Phaius hears the prayers of those who give the most."
Her smile as she spoke made him want to spit, yet Max simply nodded and kept walking to where the offering boxes sat.
All around the temple, perfectly cut stone lined the floor, and more columns with tribute to the god whose house they supported lined each wall.
Benches were filled as some listened to a man share a message about Phaius and his love.
Then his Sonar and his eyes found the group of people all on their knees before the golden statue, kept back from touching it by a cloth rope and attendants, each one praying and crying out for his help.
You're really not going to do what I sense you're about to?
Grinning, Max couldn't help himself, increasing his pace as he moved toward the petitioners.
The best way to get a god's attention is to answer prayers. Right?
//Links

43 Chapter 372 - How To Get Noticed https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2096953/chapter-372-how-to-get-noticed;[2025-03-03 12:03]

Chapter 372 - How To Get Noticed

“Sir! I must protest! You cannot do that here!”

Max shook his head and didn’t pull back the healing potion he was offering the older woman whose face was stained with tears.

“Are you saying that Phaius couldn’t have instructed me to come here and help his people?”

The woman’s cheeks turned red, and her face matched the color of her hair. Everyone nearby focused on her, not the man who had been giving out gold and potions.

“No! I mean yes! I—”

An older woman with solid white hair came up from behind her. Her robes were purple, and Max could see the blue eyes that were locked on him almost sparkling.

“He is right, Juileana. Sometimes, our protector sends those we might not expect to assist. Now then, allow him to do as he has been led, and I will handle this.”

The younger woman huffed, took a deep breath, nodded once, bent her neck, and turned to leave, her yellow robe swishing as she strode away quickly.

“Take it. Go heal your granddaughter.”

“Thank you!” the older woman exclaimed, carefully accepting the potion as she bent down multiple times, tears falling to the floor and backed away. “May Phaius bless you for your kindness.”

Nodding, Max smiled and watched as she moved quickly toward the temple’s entrance. He could already see the line growing as others joined the throng, hoping to get something from the man inside who gave it away freely.

It took enough time...

A test in many ways. Still, you have the attention of everyone here. Perhaps even the god himself is watching.

Before the next person in line could approach, Max held up his right hand. Two coin bags appeared in his left hand. He turned slightly, ensuring that his position near the base of the gold statue was where he wanted it to be.

“Phaius has directed me to give the rest to the caretakers of his home!” he shouted, his voice traveling through the space they were in. “For now, if you have a need, take it to Phaius and then speak to the attendants. They shall be tasked with ensuring this gift is used as he desires.”

A few moaned, but others cheered as Max turned and handed both bags to the older woman, a small smile forming on the corner of her lips.

“You are wise for one so young. Tell me… What is your name?”

He shook his head slightly and motioned to the crowd, which still seemed unsure if they should press forward and ask Max for a few more things.

“Not here, lest I cause a greater commotion. Let your attendants handle this. We can discuss that in person. Perhaps somewhere private.”

Gone was the slight smile, replaced with one large enough to show teeth as she stored both pouched and clapped her hands.

Immediately, half a dozen attendants moved to get between Max and the others, and she motioned for him to follow her.

As they walked past the statue and toward some doors he had seen when he entered, neither said a word, each studying the other.
Max could tell she moved gracefully and had no physical problems that his Sonar could detect. Each step was perfectly placed, her robe barely moving, a controlled stride, one most likely learned after many years of practice.
A pair of burly attendants in robes that did little to hide the chain armor underneath it stood by a door, each of them watching him until the slightest shake of the white-haired woman's head stopped their gaze.
One bowed while the other pushed open a wooden door.
She moved into the hallway, matching stones continuing into a plain-looking area. No pictures or other art lined these walls. Only the lightstones that illuminated the area were present, but at the end of the six-foot-wide hall was another door.
Before it were four guards, two men and two women, each in plate armor and holding a sword and shield.
Only their eyes could be seen, all four fixated upon Max who barely stood taller than the one leading him.
None said a word as they moved past. The metal door they stood before shimmered as the older woman touched it.
"Follow me, please," she said as she pushed it open.
Inside, he saw that the room was nothing special. Again, no fancy or expensive artwork or sculptures were present, merely a plain desk, hundreds of books lining shelves on a wall, and a pair of ordinary-looking couches off to one side.
Without stopping, she moved to one of the spots on the closest couch and sat down, motioning for him to take the other.
Max moved to where she had motioned and slowly sat down, feeling the gray-colored cushion with his fingers. It wasn't soft to the touch like Everett's, but the padding was almost perfect as he leaned against the back one. The wooden frame didn't creak at all as he got comfortable.
They sat in silence for almost a minute, still measuring up the other.
Finally, the older woman broke, her slight grin reappearing as she shook her head.
"For one so young, you play this game well. While I do not want to discount the fact that Phaius may have sent you to do what you did, years of this role have taught me that sometimes people make such claims for different reasons. Tell me, why have you come?"
"I need to speak with Phaius again."
Her smile vanished instantly, and a frown appeared as both eyes narrowed. Slowly her head leaned sideways, and both lips parted for a moment before closing.
She is waiting… you are so evil.
He couldn't help but grin at Bob's words, which only caused the older woman to lean back on the couch a little. Slowly, she brought both hands together and intertwined her fingers.
"Again?"
Her disbelief at such a statement was evident from the tone, but Max simply nodded.
"Surely you have spoken to him at least once? You know how he looks in that tan clothing that changes colors between white and yellow as he moves."
Her eyes widened, and Max could see her fingers turning white as she tightly gripped her hands.
"You… you have seen Phaius?! When? Why?"
Her outburst was so different from the facade she had put on all the other times, and Max could sense she hadn't asked the important questions.
"Let me help you out, and then we can talk about how you can help me make this happen. I'm Max Hoste, also known as Seth Pendal. I'm the one he was looking for."
The couch made a screeching noise as she pushed back with her legs and jumped to her feet.
It slid a few yards along the floor, and a glow began to form on the older woman's outstretched hand. Fear filled her eyes.

“Don’t… please. It won’t work, and I really don’t want to have to hurt you,” Max said, leaning a little further back on the couch and draping an arm over the side. “He didn’t kill me, and neither did Ockrim. Now sit. We need to talk.”
Her arm shook, and the orange glow that covered it didn’t go away. Seconds ticked by, and a bead of sweat began to form along her brow.
“You’re going to hurt yourself if you keep trying to hold that spell and the mana in it,” Max informed her. “If you want, let it go. See what happens. Just know when the guards come, you will be responsible for their deaths if they attack.”
Like a leaf in the wind, her arm seemed to be spasming, and a loud crack came as she canceled whatever spell she had. Power flooded across the room, sending her back a step.
The door swung open, all four guards rushing in quickly, weapons out and moving around the room.
“STOP! DO NOT ATTACK!”
Her voice was filled with fatigue, but the silver-haired woman held up a hand, panting.
“Do not attack. I am fine. It was a test.”
“Are you certain, Mother?”
She nodded and motioned to the door.
“Thank you, sister. I shall be fine. Now go. We must talk in private.”
All four moved as one, lowering their weapons, and strode out of the room, leaving the couch where it was as they closed the door behind them.
“You’re really him? The boy he was searching for?”
“I am. Now, please. I told you my name; tell me yours,” Max replied, having never shifted from his relaxed position on the couch.
A single cough came, and then she shook her head, wiping the sweat from her brow.
“My name… most call me Mother but that won’t work for you. I am… Kathleen Searnen. A name I have not shared in so long. Now tell me… Max Hoste… why have you come?”
She paused and glanced at the couch behind her, and a slight hint of red filled her cheeks.
Without missing a beat, she moved to the couch and pulled on it, sliding the object easily to where it had been and took a seat.
“I need to tell him something, and I’m afraid it may cause problems on our world, but he needs to know,” Max replied, leaning forward as he spoke. “Last time I somehow summoned him it caused a lot of damage in Windsor Wheel, and I—”
“That was you?!”
Her face showed the angst of that news, and he wondered what information had been gleaned about him so far.
“It was… an accident, I promise. That is why I am here. I need to see him without that *problem* happening here. Surely, you must have some way of making that happen.”
Her face scrunched, and hidden wrinkles appeared, the only other sign of her age beyond the color of her hair.
“I… we could most likely make that happen, but it is rare. The power it takes is great, and we do not often initiate that part. He did show up a little less than a year ago on his own and tell us about you… or what little he knew.”
Kathleen cleared her throat and frowned.
“Are you as dangerous as he said?”
“Only to those who try to hurt me or my family. I’m sure you witnessed or heard how the elves who continually hunted me or attacked my Faction have fared.”
He could see her eyes moving. The truth of what he spoke was most likely connecting dots, and those blue eyes widened as she leaned back and put a hand over her open mouth.
“You… you were him… that Seth Pendal!”
Tapping his bald head, Max grinned and nodded.

“Everyone needs a name, and I figured why not choose one who was known for being a hero. Hopefully, I did the name justice.”
Yes… I mean… You did, but…”
Multiple times she started to speak and stopped, shaking her head and blinking rapidly for a few seconds. Eventually, she took a deep breath and let it out slowly, smoothing her robe as she did it.
“Forgive me… you have caught me off guard, and for so long I believed that if we ever met, I would be fighting for my life. Yet now, the man I see before me is nothing like we feared. Phaius couldn’t have been wrong about you?”
“Was that a question?”
She chuckled and shook her head.
“I’m acting like a starstruck fool! Forgive me. It has been so long since I have been surprised like this. My brain is reeling from all the things that suddenly make sense, and my heart is still trying to slow down.”
He smiled, having already felt the pace at which her heart had been racing, wondering if she might pass out or die if it had gone any faster a minute ago.
“You don’t have to apologize. I have a thousand questions, limited time, and a dozen other things I must do before I depart tomorrow.”
“Tomorrow? I… I’m unsure if I can get the items I will need to try and summon him by then! I’ll need tower crystals and—”
Max’s grin grew as he pulled out two large purple tower crystals, one in each hand, and held them out.
“Would these work?”
Like a crazy person, Kathleen started to cackle, howling with laughter as tears formed in the corner of her eyes and raced down her face.
After catching her breath, she nodded and sniffed, wiping away the wet lines.
“Max Hoste… if you do not stop doing this, I swear my old heart may give out. Now, yes, those will work. Come, let’s head to where we’ll need to go.”

44 Chapter 373 - What One Trades to Live

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2098733/chapter-373-what-one-trades-to-live;[2025-03-03 12:03]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 373 - What One Trades to Live

Max walked around the room they were in, studying the crystal lines that ran along the floor.
These are like the ones in the Adventurer Hall. Does that mean these crystals are far more special than I initially thought?
Yes. Like… when you made that weapon for Dexic and how you had to control the energy orb’s power, making paths for the magic or whatever you wish to call it travel through, this crystal has a connection within the system.
Yet there are no words here, no runes. Just the crystal that is in the back of the room like in the hall.
Each of these appears to have something explicitly keyed for a purpose. I cannot answer how it is made or formed, and I doubt anyone here can or will tell you.

Kathleen had a steady stream of questions for him the entire time they had walked to this room. He answered the ones he felt comfortable with and tried to learn a few things as well.

Do you believe she honestly doesn't know how Phaius gains power from the followers?

I do. There are many more things that go beyond just a tithe or gift. Even she said that the gold or gems they tried to offer long ago that didn't come from someone outside their inner circle couldn't be absorbed. Also the fact that they can't pay someone to make an offering is interesting. It appears the system can detect a true dedication and gift to the god versus someone giving it for the wrong reason or not meeting some specific criteria.

Max nodded as he watched the woman he had peppered with a few questions get the last purple crystal to be absorbed by the shard. It was surreal watching something twice its size slowly melt and dissolve as the clear crystal shard, slightly bigger than his hand, consumed the purple object.

"That's done," Kathleen stated as she moved to where Max was. "Now, in about ten minutes, I can start the process, and we will have to wait."

"And this can take no time or hours, correct?"

She nodded and shrugged.

"I know that we are not his only world, and sometimes it takes a while for him to answer. No document in our history ever mentions him not coming eventually, but the longest delay mentioned, I believe, was a month."

"A month!?"

She waved her hand before him and pointed at a pair of plain wooden chairs against the wall.

"Sit, I still owe you an answer. With everything that has happened recently, I am certain he is probably watching and waiting to see what might happen here."

Following behind the woman as she led the way, Max considered the truth of that statement.

All it takes is someone like me to get a few gods worked up.

Bob laughed inside his head for far longer than Max thought he should.

"You asked me a question I cannot answer completely, but let me tell you the little I know. Outside of our role, we try to avoid problems between the different races, but know problems always arise. As you mentioned, yes, the elves are most often a pain in our side. Ockrim's children are content to work with us and do not have the problems as Thuy—" She stopped herself and sighed. "As the other one does. I'm not certain what the conflict is between our races, but something in history had to have been there to cause such a conflict. What it was… perhaps only the gods know because there is no record of it here."

"And when it appears a being has thousands and thousands of years to hold a grudge, they can play the long game on getting revenge?"

Kathleen's lips formed a frown, and she grunted.

"You are a dangerous man, Max. I can sense the knowledge inside you that many might overlook or ignore. It is not dangerous simply because of power but also because of a purpose. Are the rumors true? You plan on defeating the tower?"

He nodded slowly, watching her face as the frown became a grimace.

"Is that a problem?"

Sighing, she used her tongue to push out at the bottom of her lips a few times, almost as if checking to see if something was between them and her gums.

"It has been so long since one from our race has done it. The rumors of what lies at the later tower are nothing more than that. After the seventieth floor, no one really knows anymore. It is like history itself wiped away all knowledge."

"Were you a tower climber?" Max asked.

A mischievous grin appeared on Kathleen's face, and she nodded.

"I reached the forty-third floor in my time. That life was many moons ago, and when a chance to be here and take on this role came up, I gladly gave up the impending death I felt was just a floor away."

Rings appeared on each of her fingers as did earrings and a necklace.
“I don’t wear these that often, but I still have some items from that place.”
He watched as she glanced down at her fingers. Her right thumb started to spin a purple ring on her left hand’s middle finger.
“So many people I knew died… I would return from a week or two in the tower, only to learn that a full group never returned. It’s been a few hundred years since—”
“A FEW HUNDRED YEARS?!”
Max grimaced after his outburst, but he struggled to believe she could be that old.
Smiling and laughing, Kathleen nodded. Touching her white hair, she flicked her head back as if modeling.
“Yes, I’m old enough to be your… well, just old enough, let’s say. Phaius has granted me a longer life, but I’m bound to this temple. I can only leave for a day or two before my body starts to decay. Stay out more than a week, and I’ll be dead.”
“Why have a life like that?”
Tapping her chin, she stared up at the ceiling, not answering for a moment.
“I guess… after almost dying so many times and the fear of it, I struck a bargain. Better to avoid the pain of that last breath was always my motto. After one bad fight and losing a friend, the plan I had vanished. That was when I knew I was done. Every climber learns that moment. Some learn it the hard way as they take their last breath. Some experience it like I did, at the cost of so many they cared about. Occasionally, a few are smart, finding other things in this world to enjoy and carve out a life outside the tower.”
Just like Everett and Tom.
Bob didn’t reply, but he knew his skill agreed.
“Now then,” Kathleen said as she stood up, “I can activate the shard. Once I do, I’ll leave and be down the hall. A guard is stationed outside. When you are done or ready to leave, let them know, and they will get me.”
“You’re sure you don’t want to stay?”
“Oh, I want to stay, but this isn’t my moment. In all my life I’ve met our god three times. All I can say is I quickly learned that while I enjoy being able to bask in his power, I also prefer to not be in it unless I must. A fear grips my heart, and I feel as if I’m going to be crushed into the floor like a bug beneath his boot.”
“His aura…”
She nodded and winked at him, her blue eyes sparkling.
“Don’t get up. Trust me. I never know how long this might take. Are you certain you don’t want any snacks or drinks?”
Shaking his head, Max summoned a cupcake momentarily before storing it.
“I’ve got my own treats if I need something.”
Nodding, she continued to the shard at the opposite side of the room and stood beside it.
“Very well, let me begin.”
Max could feel her touch it, his Sonar picking up everything happening.
Power began to radiate from the shard and into the floor.
A low hum came, and he felt the hair on his arms rise slightly.
This is the power of the system. She is sending a signal that will travel through it to Phaius. Similar in some ways to that tracer someone had on that skill. It is designed to tell the one who is contacted where the person is that is doing so.
Each world of his must have something like this, right?
It would make sense. Still… that explains what that dark elf Quilazmore meant when he talked about sending messages to different worlds. Part of me wishes we had time to travel through the transporter Igarra had created.
Even though we might get flagged by the system for being out of our normal place again?
A chuckle came from Bob, and Max grinned.

Our time off this world was not enjoyable, but I would like to believe the gains we see now have been worth the pain. Traveling to other worlds and fighting what is on them could give us many new skills and more stats.
Max knew Bob wasn't acting in some stat or power-thirsty way. The truth was they needed to get stronger, and even though he knew the tower would be easy for a while, there would come a day it was not. Also, the threat of what lay beyond on other worlds and who might come to his meant many were still stronger than him.
Perhaps in time… but first we need to do this and get Batrire and Fowl married.
I disagree on what is most important, but we have almost another month before we can return to the other world. For now, the path before us is the best course.
As they spoke, the hum had grown louder until it stopped.
Kathleen turned, and she looked a little tired, her shoulders slumping forward slightly.
"It has been done. I shall go and rest. Good luck, Max Hoste. Tell Phaius I thank him as always."
He nodded, and she went to the door, leaving him in his chair. Soon, he was all alone in the small twelve-by-twelve-foot space.
The room's silence felt almost overwhelming for a moment after the noise it had been generating.
Standing, Max moved to the shard, his mind itching as he walked around it, hands behind his back.
We are not going to do that. I would rather not risk finding out there is another trap in place.
Where is your spirit of adventure? Would simply touching it really hurt?
Says the man who was afraid to even get near one for so long. Now you want to risk upsetting the very god we are trying to contact? Perhaps we need to discuss this wild side you're suddenly showing.
Max frowned but considered what Bob had just said.
Am I really being that crazy? I mean… I've always been cautious to a degree, haven't I?
Yes, and since what took place in the cavern with those elves, you have changed. Not just your commitment but also the lack of concern it would appear about how dangerous something might be.
Just because we can do something, doesn't mean we should. Picking a fight, touching an object of power, or anything else that could have consequences we aren't aware of is not the move to make right now, and you know it.
He nodded, frowning at the fact he was being reckless.
Forgive me… I guess… part of me feels free no longer hiding behind that wall of fear of what I might become if I give into the hunger. Now… now I just want to rush headfirst… like those first few times outside dungeons when I knew I shouldn't go in but did anyway.
Please tell me this will not be a mindset you have for a while. I'm not certain we could survive that.
Laughing, Max moved back to his chair and closed his eyes as he leaned back against it.
No… I've got you to keep me on the path I need to be. For now, I guess I'll just rest.
//Links

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/45331/horizon-of-war-the-realistic-isekai-chronicles

45 Chapter 374 – Phaius

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2100849/chapter-374-phaius;[2025-03-04 12:15, published 2025-03-03 15:02]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 374 – Phaius

He is coming.

Max's eyes opened as he stood, the sensation of the room changing slightly.

Power flowed within the crystal lines on the floor, and a pulsing purple light flashed half a dozen times.

Then it stopped, and a purple portal formed from floor to ceiling.

From the other side, Phaius strode through, his eyes locked on Max the moment he could see him.

"I wondered… the summon seemed out of place, and yet I hoped. Well done, Max, well done."

His outfit was the same flowing robes, and Phaius's muscles rippled everywhere cloth didn't cover them. Yet his eyes were purple, almost matching the portal he had walked through and had just vanished through.

"I didn't want to cause problems like last time, and I figured they had a way to summon or contact you. Thankfully, I was right."

The tiniest smile showed for a moment before the god moved to where Max was and held out a hand.

It took a moment, but Max shook it, and then a chair appeared behind Phaius as he sat down, plopping onto a crystal seat.

"Sit, please. I need to talk, and I'm certain you also have questions."

Max took a deep breath and took his own seat and nodded.

"Did you know the elven god was killing humans and harvesting their skills?"

Both eyes flashed black as they went wide, a burst of light almost cascading across the dark surface before they returned to the purple state they had been a moment ago.

"What?! Why would you…"

Phaius paused his outburst, his jaw having been rock hard in a moment, and then he blinked rapidly a few times.

"You're serious. Do you have proof?"

Max could sense the concern in the god's tone. It had changed three times already from the first moment he had come into the room.

"There is a place I could show you on a map. All that remains is a large crater from where the shard that was being used exploded. The ground is like glass and the—"

A hand rose and stopped him.

"I don't need to go now. What you described is not something you could know of unless such a thing had indeed happened," Phaius growled.

Max could hear teeth grinding and watched as the god before him frowned.

"How? How did you find this?"

"The unskilled… those in our race who are labeled this. Do you really believe they have no skills?"

Max's question made his frown deepen as both lips drew inward.

"Long ago, after I was punished for the actions of my people, there were a few examples of people without skills brought to me. Glitches, abnormalities, curses, so many other names they go by on different worlds."

Cracking his neck, the god finally looked upward and grunted before closing his eyes.

"Every world is different… this one… it was one of the better ones… a bargain for me… Ockrim is not hard to work with… Thuyja… she is not so easy anymore."

“Doesn’t saying her name possibly draw her attention?”
Returning his head to its normal position, Phaius shook it and shrugged.
“I’m not a follower of her. The only one who might have to worry about that would be the elves in your party, but even then, unless she were specifically listening, hoping to hear it from a certain elf, it would be a pain to grant that much time, effort, and power to do so.
“Every time one of her children here said her name, she would be notified, requiring her to sort through each time. Some of those elves must say her name at least ten times a day or more. I doubt she has the patience for that.”
Seems we were a little overcautious after all.
Ignoring Bob, Max nodded.
“Well, I returned home and protected my sister when the adventurer attendants tried to capture her as they had me on her Choosing Day.”
A groan escaped Phaius’s lips, but he motioned with his hand for Max to continue.
“I used some hard methods to learn an approximate location and called in a lot of favors. Apparently, they bind those who were a part of this group to obedience and silence. I doubt most even know what happened to those they captured.”
Scratching his chiseled chin, he nodded.
“No… it would make sense for a lot of reasons to make someone do that. And the further down the chain of command, the less one would need to know. Tell me, Max, what did you find?”
“A *queen* from another world using a shard and draining the… I don’t know… skill? Power? Essence of the person. She was making elixirs of red skills.”
Phaius’s face went slack, and his jaw started to slowly lower.
“Red elixirs? You’re certain? Do you have any?”
Watching the god he knew could kill him in a moment, Max leaned back slightly as the god leaned forward.
“No… I had to take the queen to the world I was captured in and defeat her there. Had I stayed, I’m certain my friends would have died in that fight.”
“And they didn’t get any?”
“No, they destroyed them.”
“What a waste,” Phaius muttered. “Those are dangerous but also powerful. It is no wonder she was making them, as the value of those to a god is quite a bit.”
“For the skills?”
Shaking his head, the god squeezed the bridge of his nose for a moment.
“No… well yes but not for them. It is a way to help one of your followers quickly. Still those are dangerous and often lead to problems down the road.”
“Like the two queens?”
“Yes… like those two.”
Max heard Phaius mutter *morons* after he had spoken, though he was certain he wasn’t supposed to have.
“Well, she is dead. I couldn’t get her gear off because none of my unbinding stones worked.”
“They wouldn’t if she’s from another world. Do you still have the corpse? I can—”
“It’s gone. She has been disposed of.”
Phaius’s head cocked sideways at Max’s last words and tone.
“Do I… no… well, thank you for bringing this to my attention. I’ll let Ockrim know. We’ll figure out what needs to be done. Now then, anything else I need to know about?”
He seems very… unaffected by the news we just gave… like it’s not that big of a deal.
To him, it most likely isn’t. I’m certain the problems he deals with from world to world, as well as the conflict between other gods, make this a minor problem.
“No… I’m headed to Nalgrun soon to help my dwarven friends get married.”
Bobbing his head, Phaius sat up a little straighter on his crystal chair.

“That should be good. Now, then, we need to talk, and while I can stay here longer than usual, I’m burning power in doing so. Recent… problems have cost me more than I want to admit, but we need to hurry for now. Let me hit you with the big points. and then I’ll need to go.”
A rolled piece of paper appeared in Phaius’s hand, and it was held out toward Max. Power radiated from it, far more than he could recall a single item ever having before.
“Take it. Again, not a lot of time.”
Wrapping his fingers around it sent waves of energy into them, and his eyes felt like they were going to explode for a moment.
“Store it.”
It took a little effort, but the power faded quickly once it was gone, no longer in his grip.
“That has two uses. You can write something on it. One word, a thousand words. It doesn’t matter. Once you roll it back up, the message will be delivered to me. I then can only respond one time. After that, once you’ve read the message, it will vanish forever.”
“Wow… that’s—”
“Not a toy,” the god stated, frowning slightly. “Do not waste it. Trust me when I say it has been a long time since I gave one out, and it took me most of that time to acquire another.”
Bobbing his head, Max watched as Phaius’s expression became blank. His purple eyes seemed to stare at the wall behind where he sat.
“Your skill is growing, and word has reached me the other two black skills are also known now. That means no god will or should be foolish to outright kill you. Some might try to capture you and force your hand that way, but it’s risky… very risky.”
“So I’m safe from Thuyja?”
“No… not in the least. She will do whatever she can to control you. Anyone you love and care for are all items she will take and collect to force you to do what she wants. Not doing so will be bad for them.”
Max blinked a few times, wondering how a god could do that and hoping someone would just blindly obey.
“Wouldn’t she be nervous about what I could become? What might I do in retaliation?”
“No… other gods have taken that path before when the black skills were active. It is a common game… Hurt my enemy, I release a friend or loved one. The skill desires growth, so they gladly accept that offer. Sometimes, the hunger is so great that a god doesn’t even need to bargain; he simply provides a portal to another world and unleashes it upon it.
The… other skills… if they are like that…
Will be growing in power rather quickly.
“What else?”
“You need to finish the tower. I know you have things to do, but there will be a time at which you must finish that tower. Doing so will take you to the next stage of all this. Right now I believe you are ahead of the other two. It appears you were unleashed first and grew strong enough for them to be given out. Somewhere in the system, they are growing, and things are going to get ugly fast.”
“Doesn’t this bother you?” Max asked, seeing the apparent lack of concern on Phaius’s face.
“No… this isn’t my first or second time hearing about the skills being loose. Rules. Everything operates off of rules. All I know is you must stay alive and reach the next part. Doing so means death for so many.”
“Like if I die in the tower?”
Phaius shrugged.
“The system might try and kick you out again, this time into a stronger host. If that fails, then the real problem begins. None of what would take place you or I can affect. Right now all that matters is you don’t die.”

“Then tell me what happens in the last part of the tower.”
It looked as if someone punched Phaius in the face the way it bunched up.
“I cannot, nor will I risk the pain of breaking that rule. Just know…”
Max watched as the god almost groaned, mouth open and eyes closed.
“Don’t die… that is all I can say… the pain even for me is too great.”
“That must be one horrible rule.”
“You have no idea. Some rules are like that, able to kill some, cripple others, and almost impossible to break. Doing so will never be done because the cost of it isn’t worth it. Then, there are guides to follow. These are not hard, fast rules, but things everyone agrees on make life better for all. Some will break them outright, and that leads to war and pain. Others bend and manipulate, skirting the potential war but not always.
“That is a rule just like others I cannot discuss. Beat the tower. Then we can.”
“Fine, I’ll beat the tower,” Max replied. “It was always my plan. What next?”
“Leave your friends.”
“What?!”
“If you care about them… leave them. Before the end… trust me… the pain…”
Max’s shock and bewilderment started to fade as he watched Phaius’s body tremble and shake.
The system… it is punishing him… he is warning us.
“The tower… before I finish the tower…”
A howl of pure agony came from the god’s lips, and then his body shook one last time as he gave the slightest nod for a brief moment.
“I… I can’t say anything else…”
Max couldn’t say a word. He saw the pain that still lanced through Phaius’s being. An occasional tremor would hit, and the man twitched from it.
“Thank you. Anything else?”
A deep breath of air filled the god’s lungs, and then the shakes stopped.
“One last thing, Max… one last thing.”
Phaius held out his hand, and a black stone sat in his palm.
“An artifact piece,” Max whispered.
Groaning, the god nodded.
“I wondered if you had acquired one yet… I wish I could give you more, and no don’t tell me how many you have. Part of why I must go is because of this. I have traded so much to get it, Max. Many of my worlds will feel the pain of what I did. This is the only way I can show my apology to you for what I attempted to do and what my people did.”
He watched as the god leaned forward and put the black stone in his hand.
“If what I believe will happen does, you might just get enough of those to complete it. You’re going to need it. If not… you can sell them after you beat the tower and gain enough power to help jump-start the next part.”
“Next part?”
Phaius waved his now-empty hand and then rose, his chair vanishing as he stood.
“I can’t say more… rules. Just know this, Max Hoste. Some gods are cheering for you. On the flip side, some are not. Lines are being drawn, and you are a piece in the game. Many will try to have a say in the direction you go. Be smart in the tower.”
He wanted to ask a question, but Phaius was already moving toward the portal that had appeared.
“I’m sorry, Max… I need to go. Be safe and good luck.”
“But—”
Phaius didn’t wait, stepping through and the portal blinking out, leaving him alone with a piece he knew was extremely rare in his hand.
That has only caused more questions to arise… still… I believe he truly was sincere about that apology. What you are holding… I sense he is right.
Max glanced at the piece and then summoned the other two from storage, feeling them wanting to move closer together.

I… I think you're right. But then the real question is, who has been pulling these strings all this time? Thuyja?
Bob was silent momentarily as they gazed upon the three objects before them.
What if it was her, and she hoped they would get your black skill and absorb it? But what if it is a totally different god? When will they reveal themselves? And why would they do this?
Either way… this means we're in for a real test… someone wants us to be something we're not, and that raises the question one more time… What will they do to try to make us that?
//Links

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Chapter 375 - Keeping a Promise

"Be safe, Max Hoste," Kathleen said as she bowed outside the door that would lead back to the main part of the temple. "I have sent a few letters to stop any who might be foolish enough still looking for you."
"I appreciate that. Too many have died, and I would prefer to keep that number to a minimum."
She bowed slightly and then pushed on the door, the sound of the area beyond immediately flooding the hallway they were in.
"Until next time."
Max grinned and nodded.
"I look forward to it. Perhaps one day you can leave this place, even if for just a moment, and touch sand again."
She rolled her eyes as she shook her head.
"Those are dreams I gave up on so long ago. Do not worry, though. I am content to live the life I do and the service I have been given. Not every task or job can be as exciting as the tower, but there is a safety here that makes me content. One day death will come, and when it does, I shall hopefully be brave enough to face it head on."
As he walked past the two guards who paid him no attention, Max considered her words, watching the crowd of people who had decreased in numbers since he left.
Death comes for many, but there are ways to avoid it. Her choice is one some might say is almost comical since she serves in a temple as its *mother* .
Because her life force is bound to this place?
Correct. It is almost like dark magic, something necromancers use, binding their souls to gems or other objects. The irony is not lost on me.
***
"I'm not sure if I should be glad that Phaius said neither he nor Ockrim knew of the things Thuyja was doing. One part of its feels like incompetence. The other part feels like neither cared for us."
Max shrugged as Everett shared his thoughts on the report.
"Still, I'm happy to know that Ockrim was ignorant of this," Fowl stated.
An elbow gently nudged him, and Max watched as his dwarven friend glanced at the head motion Batrire had made.

Tanila was looking at her hands, fidgeting and playing with her fingers.
“You alright, dear?”
Their mage nodded and cleared her throat, aware of what she had been caught doing.
“I will be. The truth of what I have served and followed hurts more than words can convey, but I know the path we need to take. Even worse is that no matter what we do, so many will still be blind to the darkness in our god’s soul.”
“That’s not fair,” Tom replied. “We’re judging all this on our ideas and—”
“Would you give her a pass?!”
The trainer grunted and shook his head, not flinching when Tanila’s outburst and fierce gaze fell upon him.
“I am not, but let me ask you a question that seems wrong but has a reason for being considered. What makes something okay in your kingdom and not okay in another?”
“Like what?”
“Do most elves believe it is okay to have children out of wedlock?”
Max winced as Tanila leaned back on the couch.
“They typically do not,” she replied slowly.
“And yet if it happens, most elves would say that any mistreatment from a human point of view is acceptable because there is a social belief and system in place which dictates how relationships are supposed to be. Yet here in our kingdom when a child is born and there is no partner or father, often the whole town may surround and help the woman and infant. While that doesn’t always happen, many cases are found. Even now, we are a Faction doing everything we can to help care for Stacy’s daughter, and no one here treats her ill for what happened.”
“You can’t seriously compare the slaughtering of ten thousand to something like that!” Cordellia interjected, scraping the chair she was on as she stood up. “Those are two totally different things!”
“Philosophically, they aren’t,” Tom replied. “Cultures look at things differently. One says something is okay, and another says it isn’t. We might be peaceful, and the other might be a bloodthirsty, warring group. Just because we don’t like their way of life doesn’t matter. We have to adjust and protect ourselves against a belief that runs deep through them. Some places, like the world Max was trapped on, believed killing was okay and necessary, and no one in that place thought otherwise.”
He cleared his throat and pointed at Max.
“Did you force the entire population to stop what they were doing and adapt to how we live here?”
Shaking his head slowly, Max tried to not grin, aware of the path Tom was going down.
“I did not.”
“Did he do that because he was okay with people killing others? Or did he choose not to try and *fix* that with limited time? The real answer might be that he knew it would be an impossible task, changing an entire world’s belief system and way of life.
“That is why”—his finger moved from Max to Tanila, who was only slightly frowning now—“her frustration with a god means little in the grand scheme of things. Unless you can somehow kill her or change her core, nothing will be different. All you can do is fight what is before you. So stop pouting and being upset you were tricked and misled. None of that will help you right now.”
Their mage grunted but nodded, sighing after a moment.
“Always the teacher… thank you, Tom.”
He shrugged and leaned back in his chair.
“I don’t like being right about things like this, but I’m tired of seeing you act like that. In all our time together you’ve never folded in such a manner, and everyone else seemed unable to call you out on it. My job in this place is to do that. Regardless of whether you can kick my old arse or not.”
Chuckles came, and Max smiled as she grinned.
“Well then, on to the last thing for today,” Everett said after a moment, and the mood took on a positive note. He had a small box appear and set it on the table. Fine

wrapping paper, covered in gold stars on a pearl white backdrop, sealed the container within.
“This is Tom’s and my wedding gift for you two. All you have to do now is wait till after you finally finish that moment.”
Fowl groaned as Batrire beat him to pick up the package. She started to shake it slightly, holding her ear up next to it.
“Do we really have to wait?”
“Yes, yes you do.”
Their healer grunted and held the gift over toward Max.
“Take it… otherwise, I’ll give in and open it early.”
Grinning, Max took it and held it to his ear, shaking it and then made his eyes go wide.
He could see the look at both of his dwarven friends’ faces.
“Wow, this is a really nice gift!”
“Dear gods, don’t do that!” Batrire shouted.
“She’s right… now I’ll never hear the end of how you know and she doesn’t,” Fowl added.
Putting the gift away, Max winked.
“I’m kidding. I have no clue.”
Two dwarves held up their middle fingers, and the room erupted in laughter.
***
For the first time he could remember, Max didn’t want to use his regeneration ability, simply enjoying the effect of the alcohol he was partaking of with his two friends.
Tom and Everett both sat quietly in their chairs as he was, admiring the color of the green liquid he had shared with them, a rare treat from Igarra’s storage.
“It’s so sweet and fruity,” Tom stated, his voice a little slurred. “I might almost say it’s better than the stuff old stuffy over there rarely shares.”
“He’s probably right,” Everett replied, taking another sip. “It also doesn’t burn near as much.”
Minutes passed as the three continued to enjoy the silence until Max drained the last of his glass and set it on the desk.
[Regeneration]
A moment later the fog cleared from his mind.
“I’m not sure when I’ll return, but if something happens, you both know I can use my ability to be here in a moment.”
Everett nodded, turning the cup on his desk a few more times.
“We don’t expect problems. Your sister is progressing safely, and in another month she may be the new talk of the town. As a whole, we’re only limited by a few things that are material related. All I can do now is keep the Faction on the path you’ve set us on.”
Nodding, Max pulled a bag from storage and set it on the floor next to Tom, who was almost asleep, both eyes struggling to stay open.
“One last gift. Don’t open it till I’m gone, and you’ll know why.”
The Faction leader raised an eyebrow but said nothing, slowly nodding his head.
“Wise move to keep it out of my reach.”
Chuckling, Max stood and pointed to the door.
“We’ll head out in the morning, and I have one last thing to do. Thank you again for everything, Everett.”
Holding out his hand, he smiled as the older man grabbed it after standing up.
“We should be thanking you and changing the name of this place in honor of all you’ve done. In fact some have already tried to get me to do so.”
“Gods no,” Max muttered. “I don’t want that at all. Besides, I’m not done yet. When I get back expect a lot more regents and new crafting materials. I’m going to try and get access to the dwarven tower.”
A low whistle came from Everett, who sat back down in his chair.
“That would take the help of the gods… but it is you, so I shouldn’t expect less.”
Chuckling, Max winked and motioned to the door.

“I’ve got one last appointment. Try to get some rest, and thank you again.”
***
“I… I don’t know what to say.”
Max shrugged and pointed at the large chest.
“Open it, I made a promise, and I always keep them.”
Dexic grinned, her eyes wider than he had ever seen them before.
She took the last few steps to the promise he had made before leaving to check on his family.
Dark green metal, covered in embossed vines and housing a relief of the large shambling monster he had just defeated, decorated the larger-than-normal chest.
“It’s so huge…”
Unable to help himself, Max laughed.
“If only Fowl was here to hear you say that.”
Groaning, she nodded and pushed open the lid, looking inside.
He watched as her knees seemed to give out and she caught herself on the edge of the chest.
“That good?”
“Dear gods… now I finally understand why they always complained when I was their other warrior.”
Moving to look inside, Max saw there were two objects for them to roll on, a fuzzy outline of something that changed as they looked at it, two giant purple gems, and an item for each of them.
“A belt… I’ve needed a new one for a while.”
Winking at the still-struggling warrior, Max reached in and pulled out the moss-colored belt, a chain that felt light and yet sturdy at the same time.
[Inspect Belt]
*****
Grotesque Shambler Belt
+ 40 STR/DEX/CON
+ 20% Damage Resist
*****
Unable to help himself, Max didn’t wait, putting the off-colored belt on and smiling at how it made him feel.
“You going to get yours?”
Dexic didn’t wait, reaching in and taking out the shield waiting for her.
He waited and watched as she held the large item that almost covered three-fourths of her body. The protective side had a covering that reminded Max of the moss that had been the outer part of the boss he had defeated.
Hopefully this protects better on that shield than it did on the boss.
I’m certain the difference in power is why it only took one hit.
Before he could respond to Bob a simple sound came, and his Sonar told him what was happening as the large warrior began to fall.
He moved, catching her under the arm.
“Woah… you okay?”
“It’s… the stats… they… how…”
“Just breathe and relax. I won’t tell you that most are like that, and if I’m honest you shouldn’t tell me what you got. Now hurry up and loot those last two items and those gems. I need to get you through the fiftieth floor like I promised.”
Dexic coughed, shaking her head and blinking a few times.
“They are all like this?!”
“Well… from this boss at least. I figured yours would be good also.”
She jerked up, freeing her arm from his hand and then took a step back.
“Wait… did you say I can have the other two items?!”
Max nodded and motioned to the chest.
“You protected my friends and family. You did that. Without your constant guidance and helpful hand I’m not sure they could have made it through any other way. Even

then, you kept them moving forward without me. For that, I owe you, and hopefully those items will make up for that.”
“I… I didn’t do that for—”
“Of course you didn’t,” Max said as he put a hand on her shoulder. “But still, I owe you, and we both know you want to see what those offer. Now take them and hurry up. I need to be asleep in a little bit.”
Scoffing, she rolled her eyes and sighed.
“You… Seth… Max, are a person who makes no sense. Thank you.”
He moved back and watched as she stored her shield.
A squeal that would make Fowl laugh came as she took out a helm.
Dexic whipped around, showing him the plain-looking piece of armor with the same off-color as the belt and shield she now owned.
“Impossible! This…”
She stored it, and a second later the old helm she wore vanished.
“Are you wearing it?”
“YES!”
He started to laugh, realizing what had her so excited.
“Ahh yes, the Invisible state! Congrats!”
Once more the famed warrior squealed and turned back to the chest.
That was a sound I never expected from her… perhaps you broke her.
Let’s not tell anyone if so.
When he saw the ring and her face, Max didn’t move as she bull-rushed him, slamming into him and wrapping her arms around.
“I… Thank you,” she whispered through the hug.
Returning the embrace he tapped her on the back three times, and then when she didn’t let go, repeated it.
“If Tanila was here, she might get jealous.”
Snorting, Dexic pulled back, wiping a stray tear that had flowed down her face.
“Sorry… all this dust from the boss.”
“Of course. Now get those crystals. We got one more floor.”
***
Lying in bed, he watched Tanila as she slept.
Tomorrow would bring a new chapter in their life as a group and yet Phaius’s words echoed in his mind.
Rest. We’ll take on the tower soon enough. You made a promise, and we both know nothing will stop you from keeping it.

47 Chapter 376 - A Big Question

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2105474/chapter-376-a-big-question;[2025-03-05 15:02]

Chapter 376 - A Big Question

After Merla hugged Batrire, Max coughed to get the older elf’s attention.
“Is he always so serious?” the healer teased as she frowned at him.
“Yes, but I can’t complain. Thank you again for healing me.”
She winked at Batrire and smiled.
“It’s my job, but still I’m glad I could make it in time. You four gave me a little excitement in my usually dull life.”
A few chuckles came from Fowl and Tanila as Cordellia kept her distance.
“Our Faction leader told us we could request a teleport to one of the dwarven towns if we paid the price,” Max informed the healer, as she was unusually chatty today. “I figured we should ask you, since a standard attendant might not give us as much help.”

“Did you forget who you are, Seth?” Merla asked, her frown present again. “You could have asked most of the attendants to carry you to the leader of this hall, and they would have done it just to brag about it later. You’re a celebrity. That’s why most of these people are staring at you.”
Sighing, Max nodded and knew exactly what the older healer was talking about. At least fifty adventurers had asked for his autograph since the time they stepped out of the carriage before the gate. Many others had come up and greeted him.
“Oh, he knows,” Fowl teased. “We’re just afraid about how much extra the transportation spell will cost with the added weight of his head.”
“That is true,” Merla stated as she tapped her chin and pretended to do some math in her head. “At least double, from the size it’s grown.”
“I’ll pay; we just need to go. There are lots of things to do, and these two dwarves need to return home so we can announce their wedding.”
Merla gasped and looked at Batrire, who was grinning from ear to ear, all of her teeth on display.
“A wedding?! Congratulations! I wish I could come and celebrate that moment with you!”
Max held back a feeling of frustration as the pair rushed forward to embrace Merla. Whispers between the three went on for a moment.
“Let it go, we’ll be fine,” Tanila told him as she pulled him aside. “You’re agitated… why? I thought last night with Dexic went well.”
“It did… it’s just…”
He trailed off, rubbing an eye for a moment as the weight of everything from his talk with Phaius hit.
“Time… once again, I feel like we’re running out…. I just want to keep you all safe and make sure nothing happens. The longer we’re out of the tower, the weaker we are. Being in it last night, seeing the gear that drops… I just want to outfit you all.”
He watched the woman he loved frown and shake her head at him.
“We will be fine, and you know rushing ahead isn’t a good thing. This wedding is special, and neither Fowl nor Batrire wants you to take away from it. So relax. Smile. If any children were present, they would run off like those last few adventurers did when you scowled at them.”
Sighing, Max bobbed his head and did his best to look happy.
“I’ll try. Perhaps I’m just jealous they’re going to be married.”
Not realizing how loud he had said that line, Max noticed the silence around him, and all of his friends, including Merla, turned toward him.
“You’re wanting to marry her, and that’s how you ask?” Fowl sputtered. “Gods, man, even I’m not that dumb!”
“I’m not asking!” Max exclaimed, realizing immediately how bad that sounded. He turned toward Tanila, who was frowning. “I didn’t mean I don’t want to, just that I… we don’t want to steal from their moment. Don’t we have to wait a while before we get married?”
“Are you asking me if I want to get married or when I’ll be okay with you asking?” Her tone was like ice, and even though he had faced down beings of great power, seeing the look of displeasure on the woman he loved directed at him struck a chord of fear for a moment.
Just drop to your knee and pull out the ring, you fool.
It only took a second for him to react after Bob told him what he needed to do. The moment his knee hit the stone floor, the small box with the ring he had purchased a while ago was in his hands.
“Tanila, forgive me. I didn’t mean to upset you, and I want nothing more than to be your husband. I had a plan on when and where to ask. We were going to visit that restaurant we had our date at and…”
He stopped talking, fumbling for a moment with the wooden case, opening and closing it a few times as he looked at the ring inside.
Alfreda had helped him design the ring, a twisting of three different rare metals, all with a single ruby surrounded by small emeralds. It was a tribute to their intertwined

lives, forming a new life in the process. Carefully, he pulled it out, stored the wooden box, and held it up between two fingers before her.
“If you’ll put up with me and my occasional moments of stupidity, will you marry me?”
A few gasps came, and Max could sense the hall’s din had gone quiet as people had gathered closer to where they were grouped up. Now, it was a spectacle for every adventurer and attendant to see.
“This seems unfair,” Tanila said with a wink, glancing around at the room. “I’m in a tough spot; if I wait too long, some might think I’m mean.”
“Say yes because you love me like I love you,” Max whispered. “Don’t do it for any other reason.”
Her lips trembled slightly, and Max could sense her heart was racing just as his was. Without waiting another second, she smiled and moved her head up and down.
“I would love to marry you.”
Max stood and slid the band onto the finger she presented him, the moment suddenly feeling surreal. It fit perfectly, which is another task their Faction crafting elf had pulled off.
He couldn’t help but grin like a fool as he stood there, holding her hand, seeing the look she gave him.
Never had a more perfect smile been created, with the way her lips parted and the light that seemed to radiate from her eyes.
“Kiss her, you fool,” Batrire said, her hand pushing him in the back.
Not needing any other help, Max moved forward, wrapping his arm around the woman he loved, and he did just that, kissing her with every ounce of passion he had inside.
A cacophony of noise came as everyone gathered near them started clapping, whistling, and hollering.
When they finally pulled apart, both of them breathing heavily, the newly engaged couple acknowledged the crowd celebrating this moment.
After thanking those who came forward and wished them good luck, Merla led them from the hall to the transportation room.
With only another small round of goodbyes required, the older healer wished them the best. Soon, the light of the spell surrounded them, and a warm, dry breeze reached their skin a moment later.
“Gods, we’re home,” Fowl muttered, pointing at the large walls that stood less than a quarter mile away.
Max glanced around, his first time ever seeing a dwarven city, and noticed immediately the difference in Nomgrom, compared to the towns he had grown up in. Every building he could see was made of worked stone; not a single house or business had wood. The street was lined with a different-colored set of stones, and sidewalks ran in perfect straight lines.
Carts laden with all sorts of goods were moving up and down the main road, and Max couldn’t help but grin as he saw that he and Tanila were now outnumbered ten to one.
“So many beards,” their ranger muttered. “I mean… and the colors. Purple?”
“Ahh, that’s an uncommon one,” Batrire said, a grin plastered on her face as she held onto Fowl’s arm. “Some dye their beard for different reasons, but only a few will dye it purple. That means she’s pregnant and has just found out.”
Max spotted the dwarf they were talking about, walking down the road with a large open backpack full of cotton. Bales of it were even strapped to her, a few small pieces occasionally falling out of the open top.
“Don’t ask,” Fowl informed him as he started to open his mouth. “Dwarven women are built differently.”
Using all of his intelligence points, Max kept his comment to himself, not wanting to cause problems within the first minute of arriving in a new kingdom.
“So… which way to your parents’ place?”
Their dwarven warrior grimaced slightly while Batrire started to smile.

“We’ll go visit my parents first. They’ve always loved Fowl, even when he took me away.”
“Your parents didn’t mind?” Cordellia asked. “I mean that he would steal you from them?”
Both dwarves started to laugh and shake their heads, and Max noted how much happier they seemed in the short time they had been here.
“Get off the platform!”
The shout had come from an attendant who emerged from a shack near the roped-off area they were standing in, wearing a guild emblem on their drab tan outfit. “If you want to loiter and have fun, go find a tavern!”
“Sorry!” Fowl yelled out, motioning for everyone to move toward the marked exit area.
A huff came from the red-bearded dwarf, who glared at them until they had exited the area.
“He seems a bit gruff,” Cordellia muttered. “Perhaps dwarves are exactly how I thought they were.”
“And how are we?” Batrire asked, a hint of an edge to her tone.
“Grumpy when you’re in their way, happy with alcohol in their hand.”
Both dwarves started to chuckle and nod, a slight smile on each of their faces.
“Seems she learns quickly,” Fowl declared as he pointed at an intersection nearby. “We’ll have to head that way. We’ll go left and head into the main city. Stay on the sidewalk, and don’t get in the street unless you’re prepared to have your ears violated by curses far worse than what I say.”
Rubbing his bare chin, Max cocked his head and grinned.
“Part of me wants to test that out and see if I can pick up any new phrases.”
“Gods no,” muttered their dwarf. “Batrire washed my mouth out before we met you so many times… I’d rather not get back into that habit.”
A bar of yellow soap and thick toothbrush, most likely for an animal, appeared in their healer’s hands as she glared at Max.
“You best not act like some foul-mouthed dwarf, or I’ll hold you down and show you why I won’t tolerate certain words.”
Waving both hands in surrender momentarily, Max winked at Tanila and smiled, catching her looking at the ring on her finger.
“Care to walk with me, my *fiancée* ?”
She flashed him a fantastic smile and nodded, taking the hand he offered her.
“Lead on, *fiancé* .”
“Ockrim help me,” Fowl said with a groan. “Promise me we weren’t like this.”
Batrire shook her head.
“No, you were worse.”
As a group, they started to laugh and chat as they followed Fowl and Batrire, the pair leading the way as they walked down the sidewalk, getting a proper tour of the third-largest city in the dwarven kingdom.
Max took in everything he saw, his mind recording all the names and buildings they passed.
Each street in this section was named after a weapon or armor, and as they came to the corner of *Battle-Axe* and *Horned Helm* , he saw a small pack of four dwarf guards walking down the middle of the street, wearing chain armor and occasionally shouting out orders at wagons who passed by.
“What are they doing?”
Fowl shrugged and smacked his mouth a few times.
“Ehh, they are out here to deal with potential brawls in the ale houses on the outer part of this area. Those two wagons most likely have dwarves who have gotten into trouble recently. Usually, they won’t bother you unless you’ve earned a reason for them to know your name.”
“And they used to know his name,” Batrire stated immediately afterward. “The stories I can tell.”
His cheeks and his nose went red at those words, and Tanila started to chuckle.

“Oh, you’re going to tell us those stories if simply mentioning them makes Fowl look like an apple so easily.”
“Bah, you can suck a—”
A bar of soap appeared in Batrire’s hand, and all the color on their warrior’s face was gone just as quickly as it appeared.
“Suck a what?” Max asked, unable to hold back the smirk he knew was present.
“A… a lemon,” Fowl finally replied.
With a simple nod, their healer stored the soap bar and winked at Tanila.
“We’ll discuss some things in private. For now, let’s get to my parents’ place before my betrothed finds himself burping up bubbles.”

48 Chapter 377 – Nomgrom

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Chapter 377 – Nomgrom

Max stared in awe as the structural quality of each of the buildings inside Nomgrom was easily better than the ones he was used to back in Peltagow or Rumstant.
“I knew dwarves were good with stone, but is there a magical skill I’m not aware of that allows them to shape it like this?”
Batrire smiled and nodded, leading the group, tugging Fowl slightly as she pointed with her other hand.
“That building is one of the main breadmakers from the olden days. If I told you that it was over a thousand years old, what would you say?”
Staring as they walked, Max saw that even from a hundred yards, the building stood out, three times larger than most and rising over four stories while most others were only two.
The lines of the stone didn’t look worn at all, and the gray tone of them had flecks of something in it that sparkled as the sunlight caught off them. Even from this distance he could see the carvings upon it seemed lifelike, dozens of reliefs with dwarves baking and selling bread to people.
“I would say you’re lying, but I can tell you’re not.”
She nodded and turned her attention back in the direction she was walking.
“That is because a few classes specialize in a rare stone skill. Only the dwarves typically acquire it, but there has been one case where a human was said to have gained it. Elves likewise have a wood skill that allows them to do what they do with wood.”
Tanila and Cordellia both nodded, and Max felt the tickling of his mind recalling having heard that before.
“So is it like what I can do or different?”
“Different. It’s more of like… working with dough. You talk about baking and how you shape bread and can fit it into molds to make it look a certain way. They do the same thing. A small piece here or there can be added to fix some error when cutting or a potential weak spot, but they can’t just make it transform into a shape like yours.”
“Perhaps you shouldn’t talk about this right now,” Fowl whispered as he tsked at her. “You notice a few people are listening.”
Their healer’s face went a little red as she turned and saw that some dwarves who were walking nearby had actually been paying attention, listening to the telling of their stone history.
“You can tell me later,” Max stated, nodding and admiring the city teeming with dwarves. “I’m still blown away by how many are here. My whole life when I grew up, I’d only seen a handful or maybe a dozen dwarves at the most before adventuring. Now I think I’ve only seen a dozen humans and one elf.”

“Three elves,” Cordellia joked as she pointed at Tanila and herself.
A loud shout came, and Max saw a cart lumbering down the road, a pair of horses moving at a quick pace. Before it was a small ball and a young dwarf who was barely two feet tall trying to get it as the cart raced down the road.
Dwarves started to shout, and the driver of the cart tried to slow down, the horses appearing unable to do as they wished. The traffic on the other side prevented the cart from getting over into the other side of the road to dodge the young child.
Without waiting, Max freed his arm, taking off as fast as he could.
It’s too far.
Not wanting to admit that Bob was right, the truth of the situation was he couldn’t make it there and grab the child in time by simply running.
[Blink]
He appeared next to the young dwarf, grabbed her, and leaped into the air, the horses plowing through the spot he had been standing in a second before. Their nostrils flared as the reins yanked each head back.
Bob was kind enough to form an air wall for Max, allowing him a place to jump off and land on the sidewalk, where a frantic mother was staring at him, her tears running down her cheeks and into her beard.
“My baby girl!”
Handing her the young child, who appeared to be in shock and yet had a smile on her face, the woman grabbed the dwarf and squeezed her tight.
“Again?”
Unable to help himself, Max laughed as the young dwarf held her arms out at Max and pointed at the sky.
“Again?”
“No, darlin’! You about got run over! I told you to stay close to me,” the mother chided them before turning and wiping a tear with a free hand. “Thank you!”
Others were gathering, and a murmuring of dwarves was filling the area as each of them commented on what they had just witnessed.
Fowl and the others arrived, pushing through the small crowd on the sidewalk.
“Let us through!” Batrire shouted. “He’s our party member!”
Dwarves moved aside, allowing the group to move closer to Max and the mother, who had now rushed forward and was giving him a hug.
“Thank you… thank you!”
“I’m just happy I could help. Sorry about your ball.”
Both the mother and child turned and saw that on the street her ball had been run over by the horses, smashed flat.
A few sobs came, and the child began to tear up.
“Don’t cry,” Max said as he bent down, freeing himself from the embrace of the dwarven mother. “Here, I have something for you.”
A cupcake, covered in yellow frosting and with a candied lemon peel on top appeared in his hand.
Both brown eyes of the child locked on to the treat, the rain of tears halting as her mouth began to smack slightly.
“Can I?”
“Gods… why not, at least she won’t cry.”
Grinning, Max gave the treat to the dwarf, who eyed it for another second before noticing her mother nodding that it was okay. Then like a ravenous wolf that hadn’t eaten in a week, the child tore into the cupcake.
Glad to have retrieved his hand before it potentially got bitten, Max winked and ruffled the brown hair on the girl’s head.
“Always causing a scene,” Fowl said as he patted his friend on the back. “Thank you.”
People began to pay attention to everyone gathered around Max, and a croaky old voice came from an older dwarf.
“Batrire? Batrire Lightbrew? Is that you?”

All five of them turned to see a male dwarf that looked like a few carts had run over him. His nose was broken, pointing sideways, and one of his eyes was most likely missing since a tattered leather patch covered an eye. Scars were on his face and wrinkled arms. Even with all that, his black beard was immaculate, glistening in the sunlight as he hobbled toward the group.
“Gatzer Drumbaldo?”
“It is you!” he exclaimed, coming to where their healer was and holding out his arms.
Batrire didn’t hesitate, moving quickly and giving the older dwarf a hug.
“What happened to you? You’ve gotten old?”
He roared with laughter, picking up their healer and spinning her around before setting her down.
Clearing his throat, he looked at their dwarven warrior and frowned.
“Fowl Hammerfall. It appears the prodigal dwarf has returned.”
“How are you, Gatzer?” Fowl asked, moving closer and holding out a hand. “Still drinking most dwarves under the table?”
The frown he had been wearing began to fade and the older dwarf sighed, taking the outstretched hand and gave it a shake.
“Well it is Wednesday… which means yes.”
Others in the crowd began to chuckle, and everyone but the mother and young dwarf dispersed.
“So tell me, girl, who be these with you? Judging by how that one moved, I’m guessing you all are in the tower?”
Almost beaming like a ray of sunshine, Batrire nodded.
“This is Max, our local hero; Tanila, our mage; and Cordellia, our ranger. Everyone, this is Gatzer… probably the richest dwarf in town, based on the amount of coins he spent at my parents’ place while I grew up.”
“Bah, why does everyone say that?”
“It’s because you never work, and all you do is drink,” Fowl said as he took Batrire’s arm and drew her close. “Only a rich dwarf can afford to sit around and drink every day.”
“Make good investments, and don’t overspend. That’s my motto… besides…”
Gatzer’s eyes landed on the ring on Batrire’s finger, and a slight frown showed through his beard for a moment.
“Engaged? Do your parents know?”
“Not yet,” Batrire replied. “We are on our way now to tell them the good news. We then need to head to Fowl’s parents and tell them the news as well.”
“Ogre nuts,” the dwarf cursed, spitting on the ground.
“Ogre nuts,” came a muffled mimic from the mouth of the child, struggling to chew the entire cupcake in her mouth.
“Curse again near my child, and I’ll drag you to my house and wash your mouth out!” exclaimed the brown-haired mother, who was now glaring at Gatzer.
“Gah, forgive me, woman! I didn’t see the child! I…” He glanced around and then motioned with his head a bit farther up the sidewalk. “I’ll be over here, waiting on these five to join me. Fowl, I need to tell you something.”
With that the dwarf moved off, leaving the party with a confused look as the mother never stopped glaring at the older dwarf until he was a bit away.
“Does every dwarf woman threaten to wash one’s mouth out?” Max asked, trying to change the mood.
“Gods, boy, you best learn that if you curse near a child, every mother around will be able to take you home and wash your mouth out. We don’t tolerate that kind of language around our young ones.”
Holding up his hands and waving them slightly, Max nodded.
“No worries, I’m not one known for saying things like that. Usually it’s only hair dw—”
An elbow from Tanila cut him off as the kindness the dwarven woman had shown him a minute ago changed, her same glare that Gatzer had received falling upon him.
“Who taught him that?!”
Fowl let out a whistle as his eyes darted around.

“Um… I’m going to go see what the old drunk wants. You ladies have fun.”
With that, their warrior took his escape, hurrying to where the patch-wearing dwarf was waiting.
“Perhaps I should go as well.”
“Perhaps you should,” Batrire said as she moved closer to the young girl’s mother. “Forgive him, he doesn’t know.”
As Max made his way from the danger he sensed was far worse than some beasts, he could hear what the woman said.
“Who would teach a man such a filthy thing? I mean… only the ignorant would talk about another dwarf’s balls.”
Unable to help himself, Max started to chuckle and then laughed, speeding up his pace to get away from the quartet that was watching him.
“You’re going to owe me,” Max declared upon reaching his warrior friend. “Why didn’t anyone tell me that was such a bad thing?”
Chuckling, Fowl shrugged.
“It’s not a bad thing among dwarves or the other races unless you’re around children. That part…” His friend trailed off and winced. “Yeah, that was on me. I should have warned you about that part, for certain.”
Gatzer was frowning at the pair, and when both of them glanced at him the one-eyed dwarf gave them a stink eye.
“Fowl Hammerfall… you’re in for a rough ride. Like a drunk dwarf on a donkey, you better be prepared for what might come out of Jataic’s mouth. Ensure no child is within a mile of his place.”
“Jataic?” Max asked.
A sigh escaped his friend, both shoulders dropping slightly.
“Batrire’s father. He’s a… large dwarf.”

49 Chapter 378 - Batrire’s Home

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2110961/chapter-378-batrires-home;[2025-03-07 15:16]

Chapter 378 - Batrire’s Home
“You’ve been gone a while. You two have missed out on a lot since that fateful day.”
Max watched as the three dwarves walked ahead of Tanila, Cordellia, and himself, each of them having spent some time already discussing the goings-on of the city.
“Nomgrom has been busy since the last brew festival, and your father won another trophy to put on his wall.”
“How many does that make? Seventeen?” Fowl asked.
“Eighteen,” Batrire replied. “He’ll be excited about that. What about the rest of the city?”
Max sensed a slight shift in how Gatzer’s stride stiffened, the older dwarf almost seeming to pull up as he took a moment to reply.
“There have been many who have gone to the capital. Fowl’s parents and one of his brothers have all left and are now working there.”
“What?!” their warrior exclaimed, grabbing the other dwarf by the shoulder and spinning him around. “They left their forge?! Why?”
“Don’t worry. Your other two brothers and sister are there, still carrying on the family name, just that the… king needed a few more weapon and armor smiths. He had a contest, and well… your mother produced an armor set, while your father produced a hammer and axe that won. They were things of beauty.”
Gatzer seemed to be staring off into the sky with his one good eye.
“You should have seen the excitement in our city as they left, an actual escort coming to take whatever supplies they needed as well as the furniture your mom wouldn’t leave here. They took your youngest brother, Grondir, with them. Now just

the older three remain, but they have been busy from what I know. Most of the other forges in that area are struggling to find work, now that they have the king's seal upon their shop."
"The seal of the king… when?"
"Five months ago… maybe four. I'd say my memory is a bit foggy, but that wasn't really something I put a ton of time into remembering. When one reaches my age, you learn to enjoy the quiet moments with an ale in your hand and no one to lecture you upon getting home late."
Batrire's hand squeezed Fowl's shoulder as he stood there.
"We'll be fine, my love. We can tell my parents and then travel to the capital and find yours. After that, we can do the wedding."
A small snort came from Fowl, who then sighed.
"Perhaps it's best for now. I'm not sure how they would have taken all this at once. Besides, your dad will most likely be the harder one right now to deal with."
"Should I go on ahead and purchase a lot of ale to make the man happy?"
Their warrior gave the older dwarf a gentle shove and shook his head.
"No," he replied, taking a deep breath and puffing out his chest. "I've learned to handle my own problems, and this sounds like something I need to deal with head-on. We won't try and grease the gears with your money, and I'm ready to go see Batrire's parents and tell them that I love her and we're getting married."
The tiniest gasp came from their healer, and then a giant smile appeared on her lips as she drew closer to Fowl.
"Let's go, my love. Your father doesn't scare me in the least."
As the pair started to walk away, Tanila leaned in to Max.
"Is he telling the truth?"
Nodding, he smiled and shrugged.
"Everything about him from the way he was standing, walking, his voice, and even his heart says that he's telling the truth. If I had to bet on something, I think Fowl was honest when he was glad his parents weren't here. Now I'm really curious about what leads to this amount of trouble."
Cordellia joined their small huddle and winked.
"Dwarves… if you think elves are moody, just wait. We might be in for a fireworks show."
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The last few buildings and businesses they passed grew in size, each one taking up a larger amount of space on the block where they were situated.
Different restaurants had places for wagons and carriages to be parked, one even having an area where dwarves were tossing axes at targets, loud shouts and hollering coming from whoever was winning or losing.
"It's there," Batrire said as she pointed to a building that had fine worked stone walls surrounding it.
"That's far larger than I had expected," Cordellia stated. "Just how rich are you?"
A groan came from their healer as she shook her head.
"My family is well off. They have been brewing alcohol for over a thousand years, and while I said my father has eighteen awards to his name, the family has over a hundred. While that is quite good in this town, there is one in the capital who boasts almost five hundred of the trophies. That is why they are there, and we are here."
"Still… all this space. In any elven city they would be well off. Very well off."
"Bah, don't let her fool you," Gatzer called out. "I've probably paid them more money than anyone else in the city, and trust me, they aren't hurting for gold. Most of the city gets at least a cask or two each week from their brewery."
Max's nose twitched, and the smell he detected a few blocks ago had grown stronger, the smell of grain being turned into alcohol, one he wasn't as accustomed to as some might expect. His time growing up back home hadn't been spent near any of the breweries, and he didn't want to get a skill in it, so he avoided that chance when it came.

“Seems a steady stream of traffic already, and it’s not even night time yet,” Tanila said as she motioned to the line of dwarves who were waiting outside a gate and lined up along a wall.
“Oh, that’s because of the new brew that Jataic created. Somehow, he put alcohol and magic together in his latest creation. Now it causes a dwarf to fart so hard it makes one wonder how no holes have been found in every pair of pants in town.”
“An ale that causes farting?” Fowl asked. “Sounds… fun.”
Chuckling, the one-eyed dwarf nodded.
“That it is… some call it a Rear Blaster or a Butt Bubbler, but if I’m honest, the real name isn’t spoken much since the last dwarf happened to blurt it out around a gaggle of kids. Poor dwarf couldn’t taste anything after that group of mothers held him down and wore out his tongue.”
Crossing the street when there was no danger of carts coming, the group moved toward the gate and a pair of dwarves in leather and holding clubs came toward them, holding up their hands.
“Sorry, no cutting in line. If you want a drink you’ll have to—”
“Batrire?”
The one who had cut off the first moved quickly, and Max realized it was a female dwarf, her voice and the shape under the armor catching his attention.
Batrire nodded and held her arms open.
“Ruggula? Is that really you?!”
“Aye! Praise Ockrim, the prodigal daughter has returned!”
Both women embraced and laughed, each of them squeezing the other tight as a pair of dwarves closest to the open gate started to make for the unprotected entrance.
“You two! Don’t make me send you to the back!” the other guard shouted out.
Max grinned as he watched the pair, trying not to eavesdrop on the whispers they were talking in.
Finally, after they pulled apart, the red-headed guard turned and looked at their warrior.
“Fowl Hammerfall. You have grown. Not just in height but most likely a pair between your legs if you’re walking as you are and not slinking in by a side door.”
“Ruggula. It seems your mouth is as lovely as I always remember. One day, I hope to grow a pair as big as yours.”
The guard laughed and came to Fowl, the pair hugging each other for a moment before the green eyes of the woman fell upon Max and the two elves.
“So… a party of five… and with elves and a human. I’m guessing you all have returned home to announce you’re going to enter the tower?”
Fowl’s mouth started to open, and Batrire quickly moved to where he was and elbowed him.
“Well, we wanted to tell my parents the big news before we took the next step,” their healer replied. “It’s been a busy time since I left home, and I felt we should come back.”
Nodding, Ruggula took a step back and nodded at Max and the others.
“Well, I guess that means you all can skip the line, except you,” the guard stated, looking at Gatzer. “You’ve already had your share of alcohol for the day. If you want to get in again, get to the back of the line.”
“But—” the one-eyed dwarf started to protest, stopping when the red-headed guard moved quickly to stand almost chest-to-chest with him.
“No complaining, or we won’t let you in for a few days,” she growled.
“Bah! If these youngins weren’t around, I’d say things not meant for dwarves of culture!”
Ruggula started to laugh, shaking her head, and raised her finger, pointing at the end of the line.
“Well then, I guess that means we understand each other. Now move before I play everyone’s favorite game, *toss the drunk dwarf* .”
Gatzer glanced at Tanila, who shrugged, somehow surprising Max as she kept a straight face.

“Perhaps the line won’t be that long,” their healer stated. “Regardless, I’ll tell Father what a help you were. Maybe that will earn you a free pass in the coming days.”
As the older dwarf shot the guard a hand gesture, Batrire motioned for everyone to follow her.
Max saw the gate of the entrance they went through had a large crest that symbolized the family name. Somehow, inside his mind, he understood it, but he was not sure if it was knowledge he had acquired somewhere or the language skill he possessed.
“Those runes and images, they talk about honor, beer, and Ockrim,” he said as they passed by it. “ *Honor comes from brewing for our god.* Am I correct?”
Fowl started to cough, and he could feel Tanila and Cordellia both staring at him.
“You… interpreted that perfectly,” Batrire said slowly. “I… I’m impressed. Do you see these symbols, the cup, barley, sun, and crown?”
Max nodded as their healer moved closer to the metal doors. She touched them, almost with an affectionate stroke, her fingers gliding across the relief that stood out on the door.
“As a child, my father always told me what our family means to Ockrim. That we brew to make him happy is the goal in everything we do. Each part of the process is an act of worship.”
Her tone seemed distant, yet it was also filled with joy.
“Whenever I was young, my dad would carry me around the shop with the rest of the family. His brothers and sisters would sing and tell stories, yet the most important part came when they tested a new batch. A small shrine is in there for Ockrim, and each glass deemed worthy was set out first. The next morning I would come running and see that the glass was always empty. Proof, Dad said, that Ockrim was pleased with what we had done.”
“Does he actually drink it?”
Batrire turned and smiled at Cordellia, shrugging as she shook her head.
“The little dwarf in me says yes, but the older one who caught my uncle one time draining it dry says no. Still, part of me doesn’t care what I saw. It was hard not choosing to be part of the brewers. There is a history here, yet my parents didn’t complain too much when I took the path I did.”
“Too much?”
She nodded again at their ranger and then pointed at a large warehouse that was away from the noise where any dwarf who made it inside went.
“Inside those walls is a history of my family. Pictures, busts, and other memorials to each dwarf who took on the family skill are immortalized in there. A special room exists, and only those who brew will ever be there. I… No matter what happens, I won’t ever have a place in that room.”
Laughter from inside the large stone ale house that was bursting at the seams stole from the quiet moment they were having as Batrire’s gaze fell to the stone floor.
“Perhaps he’ll let you in now when you tell him how far we’ve come in the tower,” Fowl said softly, slipping his arm around hers. “If not, we’ll start our own room and tell each of our children how their mother kept me alive through demons, dragons, spiders, and more.”
She sniffed and looked up at Fowl, her eyes slightly misty and stroked his beard for a moment before giving it a sharp tug.
“Damn you, Fowl Hammerfall,” she muttered. “You’re going to make me cry before I see my father, and when he kicks your arse, don’t blame me.”
In a moment their dwarven warrior was covered head to toe in armor.
“Bah, I’d like to see him try!”

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Just a heads up - Book 8 is finished and I'm writing book 9.

I know some people are 'ehh' with the book 7 side and all I can say is that after having written it, discussing long term plans/goals with beta readers and more, it lays foundational stuff for what comes through the remaining two books. For those still reading, I hope you'll keep at it, knowing there's a reason for it and that book 8/9 are the final parts that are coming to a head.

Appreciate you all and enjoy the weekend!

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50 Chapter 379 - Play Toss the Dwarf https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2113402/chapter-379-play-toss-the-dwarf;[2025-03-08 15:02]

Chapter 379 - Play Toss the Dwarf

Max had been near a few dwarf ale and beer houses in Peltagow, but he had never actually stepped foot in one. The noise inside made him wonder just how many armies must be inside.

“It’s so loud,” he moaned at first, his Sonar skill taking the brunt of dozens of conversations all being had at the same time, each person almost yelling to be heard over the din. “How many are in there?”

“Maybe a hundred,” Batrire shouted, seeing him wince for a moment. “It’s a slow day! Sometimes there would be benches and tables out here. Plus, there aren’t any dwarves playing with axes, so Mom must not want to deal with the rowdy ones.”

He glanced at Tanila, who was smiling. Her eyes darted everywhere, watching the dwarves who staggered by, enduring the cacophony of noise that came from every bearded being present.

A loud roar suddenly erupted inside, and a dwarf who reminded Max of Buwingrid on the other planet appeared at the doorway. He was easily over six feet tall and almost as round as two dwarves. His brown beard hung down over his rotund belly, and a leather apron with lots of stains had small metal hooks with clasps on it. A few had cups clipped to them, making clanging noises of metal on metal as he swayed from side to side, a normal-sized dwarf caught in his meaty grip.

“I said, NO MORE!”

With a simple twist of his body, the dwarf he had once been holding went airborne. Max was about to move to try to catch the flying dwarf, only to realize that it was a perfect toss, and after the black-haired dwarf reached the highest point of his flight, he came crashing down into a pen filled with hay.
Cheers came along with laughter and applause of the dwarves outside, as the entertainment landed in the middle of the padded area.
Batrire had froze, a dozen yards from the doorway, and Max could sense her trembling slightly.
“When I say no more, I mean—”
The loud bellow was cut off, and the abnormally large dwarf froze, his mouth open and eyes locked on their healer. A few tears started to form in each eye, and with a speed Max hadn’t imagined possible, the one he knew had to be Batrire’s father, who was crossing the ground between them, arms open.
“My little B!”
“Daddy!”
No one else spoke. The cheers and applause cut off as the two collided. The larger dwarf picked up his daughter and swung her through the air, pressing her against his chest.
“I’ve missed you so much,” Max heard him whisper. “Your mother and I… we…”
His words stopped, as did his spin. His eyes fell upon Fowl and the rest of the party, all watching with smiles at the affection being shown to their healer.
“Fowl Hammerfall.”
Gone was the excitement and joy. Replaced instead was a gruff tone as the larger man set his daughter down.
“Jataic Lightbrew. I brought her home safely as I promised,” their dwarven warrior replied, his tone steady, yet with every ounce of armor except his helmet on.
“That you did… still… I feel I owe you a beating.”
“Dad, please—”
A hand came up from her father, and he shook his head. After taking a few steps and glaring so hard at Fowl, Max swore that a hairy caterpillar had replaced the dwarf’s bushy eyebrows.
“You stole her away and didn’t give us time to give her a proper send-off. Tell me, boy, have you come home, realizing you made a mistake?”
“No…” Fowl replied, pausing momentarily as he stepped closer, his chest plate pressed against the larger dwarf’s stomach. “I’ve come to tell you we’re getting married.”
A few coughs and gasps came as more dwarves exited the ale house. A dwarf who looked exactly like Batrire if she was older, taller, and a little heavier burst forth right as Fowl said those words.
“Married?! My daughter is getting married?!”
“Not now, Norhalin!” snapped Jataic. “This pup doesn’t have the balls to—”
A smile appeared on Max’s face as Fowl grabbed Batrire’s father’s waist. In a moment, the dwarf, who he was certain would get everyone’s bet for winning a fight between these two, was off the ground, spinning like a top as Fowl reacted.
“I… said… we’re…. getting… married!”
As the last word came out, Fowl sent the oversized dwarf flying, his rotund shape looking like a boulder slung from a catapult.
It appears your dwarf friend has learned how to throw things after all that time in the dungeons and tower.
Max couldn’t help but laugh, realizing Bob was right, seeing that the half-drunk dwarf staggering out of the pile of hay barely avoided becoming a dwarven pancake as Batrire’s father crashed into the padded area.
“Fowl!” Batrire shouted, as she started to move toward her father and then stopped. She paused and shook her head, grinning. Then she retraced her steps and moved to stand next to the dwarf she had shouted at a second ago. Once there, she took his hand, tapping on his plate glove until it vanished, and intertwined her fingers with his.

Like a bull, Jataic emerged from the pile, hay going everywhere, stuck in his beard and brown hair.
He charged across the stone floor, with a speed that again surprised Max.
Fowl moved forward, standing before Batrire, letting go of her hand and clasping his behind his back.
Everything felt slow, and while he wanted to intervene, Max wondered what was going on in the mind of her dad.
Two steps before he bull-rushed Fowl, the large dwarf swung, his fist coming like an arrow and connected with Fowl's chin.
A cracking sound came next, followed by a howl of pain.
Groans and expressions of pain and horror appeared on every face as they looked at the result of the punch.
Bones stuck out from the misshapen hand.
"Mah hand! He broke my hand!"
Cordellia snorted, and Max could sense that Tanila was covering her own mouth, trying not to smile.
"Is it my turn to punch you?" Fowl asked, taking a step to where the larger dwarf had retreated, holding his misshapen hand in one arm. "Perhaps you should have asked how our adventuring has gone."
The tone his friend spoke in was surprising. Gone was the dwarf he had adventured with this past year. The playful jokes and the tone of always having a dirty innuendo on his lips weren't present. Instead, he was a dwarf defending something he believed in.
"Perhaps you should have asked what rank we are. Or even better you should have found out just what level I am."
All his armor vanished, revealing a hairy-chested dwarf in leather boots and pants.
"You could have at least asked to see my chest and challenged me to rip the hair from it for her hand, but no, you acted like a fool."
"Fowl…" Batrire said before being cut off.
"Let him talk." It was the first time Max had heard Batrire's mother speak, and her tone left no doubt about how she felt. "He started this. Let these two finish it."
Grunting once, Batrire nodded.
Jataic glanced at his wife, seeing the way she shook her head and the frown she wore, which was not hidden by her braided beard.
"Go ahead, rip off some of my hair if you think you're dwarf enough," Fowl said, moving till he was just a few feet from Batrire's father. "Just remember, I get a turn afterward."
Still wincing at the pain of what he was experiencing, Jataic shook his head.
"What… what level are you?"
"Do you want to know my actual level or the floor of the tower we've passed?"
Every eye in the place went wide, and a few cups of ale bounced off the stone outside, their owners apparently shocked by a question like that.
"The tower? Impossible! You just stole her a year ago!"
"I'm past the 50th level in the tower," Fowl said, moving closer, holding his hand out and making a fist. "I believe I'm entitled to a punch. Though under the rules of our kingdom, if you die from it, know that's not my fault."
Jataic's eyes moved back and forth, one moment on the small fist that Fowl had made, the next at Batrire, who was glaring at him and then at his wife.
"He's telling the truth, you idiot," their healer said. "We've passed the 50th floor in the tower."
Everywhere, dwarves began to whisper, and Max watched as they all shook their heads in disbelief. A pair, he sensed, were running out the gate, shouting to everyone.
"Batrire Lightbrew and Fowl Hammerfall have beaten the 50th floor in the tower!"
Grunting, their dwarven warrior cracked his neck and rotated his shoulder.
"So, Jataic Lightbrew… as I said, I've come to tell you I'm marrying your daughter. I would have preferred to do this differently, but I'll have you know right now."

He reached up, grabbed the leather apron, and overpowered the larger dwarf, pulling him down to where he stood.
“Do that again, and I’ll rip every hair from your chest, do you understand?”
A snort came from Jataic, just inches away from Fowl’s face.
“You’ve grown a pair, it seems. A pair larger than mine.”
Her father sighed and held his injured hand out to his daughter.
“B, would you heal this, please? After that, I can hug my soon-to-be son-in-law.”
Cheers came as Batrire moved to where her father was, casting a heal on him, the bones snapping into place.
Letting go of the leather apron, Fowl stood there, watching the older dwarf adjust himself.
He took a deep breath and let it out slowly.
“Forgive me again. Come give me a hug.”
Jataic spread his arms and stood there, glancing at Fowl and Batrire.
“Stop showing off already and give him a hug.”
Winking, Fowl leaned over and kissed her on the cheek. Then, he rushed to where her father stood, embracing him and causing everyone to laugh when he picked him up and spun him around.
“Dwarves are weird,” Cordellia muttered to Max and Tanila. “I mean… who goes around tossing their soon-to-be father-in-law?”
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Max sat in the stone booth, his senses no longer overwhelmed even as the noise inside echoed off the thick, stone-cut walls. Stone tables and benches were everywhere in the middle of the room, and two walls were lined with booths like the one he, Tanila, and Cordellia sat in.
A pair of dwarves played music on a drum and lute, and while some danced, most listened to Fowl and Batrire as they told stories, free ale being guzzled by the tankard.
Everywhere, dwarves were laughing and enjoying something Max knew none had expected.
“He’s in his element… like Fowl is a totally different dwarf,” Cordellia shouted as she leaned over the table. “Did his balls drop or something? I mean… just look at him!”
Tanila chuckled and sipped her drink, no longer wincing at the taste.
“A long time ago, when I first met the two of them, he was a little more like this. I think… partying with Max made him feel less of a dwarf. But here, in his own land, he knows where he stands, and he knows what he wants. He shared a bit with me a long time ago about how the split with his family went, and I think that reunion might be even worse than this one was.”
“Worse? How does something get worse than watching a troll of a dwarf be sent flying through the air and their hand broken?”
A slight frown appeared on their mage’s lips.
“I’m not certain, but I know his parents basically disowned him in some ways,” Tanila replied. “Part of me can understand how he feels. Not having the approval of one’s parents. Not filling the role or expected plan for your life. This culture is far worse than ours. You know that.”
Slowly, Cordellia nodded and then took another drink from her tankard, emptying the thing and setting it down on the table with a clang.
“That is true. We do not care what one does as long as it honored… you know who.”
Both of the women turned and looked at Max, who was staring across the room at his friend.
“Max?”
Max shrugged without taking his eyes off the dwarven warrior standing on the table, acting out a battle he believed he knew, somehow putting on a show that seemed so out of place for his friend.
“My parents didn’t care about what I became. As long as I was happy, they were fine with me being a Baker. Now… I think they are content knowing I’m safe and alive. I can tell my mom still has some problems and there is some pain she keeps hidden,

but the smile she wears is a real one now. You both have seen how much weight she started to put on now that she is finally eating again. For that, I'm grateful to each of you here for helping me grow strong enough to return home and protect my family."
Tanila squeezed his arm and smiled.
"Helped him grow strong enough," she snorted. "Like you needed any help to do that."
"Without you, my soul might have been lost, and trust me, I'd rather be the weakest one in the world than a man without a soul."

51 Chapter 380 – The Importance of Family

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2115194/chapter-380-the-importance-of-family;[2025-03-09 14:02]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 380 – The Importance of Family

Fowl's Point of View
"There I was, surrounded by almost twenty red skeletons, each taller than Jataic, while the boss, who stood over twenty feet tall, came at me, sword in its bony hand, trying to hack my arms off."

Fowl rolled across the stone table, knocking off a few mugs, but stood up, one arm held upward, his shield suddenly appearing as he rose.

"With a twist of my hips, I sent the sword to the side, feeling the metal grind against mine, swinging my hammer and causing its armor to crack."

Cheers came as he mimicked a swing, making a noise that was supposed to sound like such an impact.

"Bah, you didn't do that!" Batrire shouted from the chair at the edge of the table. "None of your strikes caused its armor to crack!"

"Quiet, woman!" Fowl shot back, winking at her. "Unless you want to get up here and tell everyone how you sit in a chair and read books while I almost die every fight, let me make them enjoy this moment!"

He watched her roll her eyes for a moment before winking at him and then blowing a kiss.

"As I was saying, before I was rudely interrupted, the metal on its shin began to crack. We traded blows, the smaller skeletons unable to do anything to me, and my amazing defensive abilities easily stopped all their attacks."

He held out his right hand, a biscuit appearing in it.

“One of the fools got close, and I grabbed its head in my plated glove, and like this,” he squeezed, sending a shower of crumbs everywhere, “I crushed its skull, causing a pillar of fire to rise up from where it had been standing.”

Gone was the simple brown shirt he had been wearing, and Fowl smiled as he motioned to his hairy back.

“Only a few of them were singed, unaffected by even such a spell. Truly, you must realize there are few dwarves like me!”

Cheers and groans came as some called for him to put his shirt back on.
“Please, this is a family establishment,” Jataic called out. “Put yer shirt back on, or I’ll have to toss you into the hay!”

Most of the noise quieted down immediately, and Fowl turned to look across the room at the bar where Batrire’s father was working, pouring another line of tankards from a flask as he walked behind the stone bar.

“Bah! You wish, old man!”

A single finger appeared on Jataic’s hand as the dwarf continued to pour drinks.

“He might not do it, but I will,” Norhalin stated as she moved to where her daughter was sitting. “Now put on your shirt and sit down. We need to talk.”

Coughing once, Fowl gave a slight bow, his shirt appearing in the blink of an eye.

“It appears I’ll have to return to how I slayed this boss later,” he declared, hopping off the table and onto the floor, taking the seat next to the love of his life.

A few more groans followed until a bell rang out, and everyone quickly ran to the bar, clambering to get another free drink.

“You’re going to pay for all those,” Batrire’s mother informed them both. “Just know I won’t make you pay till afterward. And before you protest, my dear daughter, we all know that if you’re that high into the tower, you can easily pay for free drinks for a year with the gold you be earning in there.”

Smiling, Batrire nodded and shrugged.

“Perhaps… but I did spend a lot of it on beard waxing.”

Fowl saw his soon-to-be-mother-in-law roll her eyes, a perfect copy of how Batrire did hers.

“So then. What is the plan?”

“Regarding?”

Norhalin cleared her throat at Fowl’s reply.

“The wedding… when is it going to take place? Where will you have it? Should I be expecting a grandchild soon?”

“Ma!”

“What? Can’t I ask why there was a sudden announcement of a wedding? This wouldn’t be the first time a dwarf has returned home, wanting to suddenly get married without even knowing what happened in the last year.”

“She’s not pregnant,” Fowl said before his eyebrows scrunched together, and he looked at Batrire. “You’re not, are you?”

An elbow came at him, hitting his side.

“No… I am not, but if you ask that question again, I’ll limit any chances of that happening for a long time.”

Her tone told him exactly what he needed to know, and without saying another word, Fowl leaned over the table, snagged a half-drank tankard, and lifted it to his lips.

Gods, these women… I feel like that was a trap… Max warned me about these things. Perhaps I should put a few points into intelligence after all.

Considering that thought momentarily, he shook his head and tossed that silly notion away.

Pfft… a warrior with intelligence… what am I, some bald human?

With the noise in the rest of the building it took him a moment to realize that both women were still staring at him.

“What?”

“I asked some questions. You need to answer them,” Norhalin replied.

Feeling his cheeks turn a little warm, Fowl waved a hand before him.
“Nope! That’s not my job! Batrire was absolutely ada… adamon…”

“Adamant,” their healer said.

“That’s it! Adamant that I don’t get to do more than pay and say yes.”

“Well at least he’s trained,” her mother stated. “Hopefully, he won’t act a fool like your father did.”

Fowl watched his love grin and then leaned past her mother to look at her dad, seeing the man shouting and yelling as he handed out free beer to every dwarf who came by.

“It was funny to see him fly through the air like that. I’m just glad he didn’t break anything.”

“Oh, his constitution is high enough, and that’s not going to hurt him. Besides, with all that padding, he bounced more than most would,” her mother replied. “Still… I hate that your first moment back went like that.”

“It actually went better than I expected,” Fowl said. “Part of me wasn’t sure how he would respond to me returning with his daughter. I knew he wasn’t happy about how that went down at all.”

Norhalin nodded slowly, her beard moved slightly, hiding the frown he knew was under it.

“You didn’t earn any points with him… Still… we both knew that our little B was infatuated with you and would follow you anywhere you went.”

“Infatuated?”

Groaning, Batrire tapped her head.

“It means I loved you.”

“So… you don’t love me now?”

Norhalin chuckled as Batrire sighed.

Grinning, Fowl reached out and gently tugged on her beard.

“Not in public,” she hissed, her cheeks turning red.

“Sorry… I just… I love you, Batrire. You know what you mean to me. I’d give up all the gold in the kingdom just to be with you.”

He noticed a sniff and a small tear form in Norhalin’s right eye.

“I haven’t heard words like that since your father wooed me. Gone are the days he compared me to barley and hops. My personality no longer has a glow like the golden ale he sometimes brews.”

“Oh, don’t worry… I’ll make sure my man doesn’t forget to say those things or I’ll cut off his hair while he’s sleeping.”

Scooting his stone chair back a few inches, Fowl held up a hand.
“Now hold on there… no need to get ugly… I’ll make sure to ask Max for some tips on what to say.”

Batrire chuckled and shook her head, winking as he moved his chair back to where it was.

“A human and two elves… I always knew you were not one to be bothered by them. What was the name of that human girl you played with as a child?”

Laughing for a moment, Batrire grinned.

“Gloria.”

“Ahh yes, Gloria. That one was a minx… always a bit of trouble. No wonder you got the healing class with all the bandages you put on her from all the scrapes she got you and others into.”

“But she was the one who brought Fowl into my life,” Batrire pointed out.

“Yet another bit of trouble she got you into,” Norhalin said with a wink.

“Bah, more like the greatest thing in her life since being born to you two.”

“He has a silver tongue, almost like a bard. Perhaps he knows how to use it in many ways.”

A spray of ale shot out across the stone table, and Batrire started to choke on it as her mother began to laugh. Fowl tried to offer help, seeing her struggling to breathe after the comment she had just heard.

“I… uh… perhaps I’ll go and see if Jataic needs some help,” he declared, standing up and leaving the pair of women to have a moment together.

“Put a few points into intelligence?”

Rolling his eyes, Fowl quickly approached the bar, certain that Batrire would be fine as a second coughing fit took over from her mother’s last comment.

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“I… I want to apologize for how I took your daughter from you. Looking back, I see how that must have been hard on you.”

Taking a deep breath, the largest dwarf in the building nodded.

“Yer not the only one who needs to apologize. I was a fool and let my anger get the best of me. Thank you for bringing her back and not ripping the hair from my chest.”

He laughed at that joke, the thought of what that moment might have been like playing out for a second.

“Did you just imagine that?”

Shaking his head, Fowl smiled.

“What kind of dwarf would I be to do such a thing? Besides, we both know your daughter wouldn’t have allowed it.”

He watched as Jataic rubbed a hand on his apron where the tender spots most dwarves would go after first during a hair-pulling match were.

“I’m just glad we got women smart enough to stop us from being fools. Still, I must say part of me was impressed by your toss, while the other part of me was humiliated. I might have to rethink how many times I do that to these drunks.”

“Bah, you can toss me if it would make you feel better. Just make sure to let me know when you want to do it, and I’ll put on my best acting.”

He watched as Batrire’s father stepped back from the bar and crossed both arms.

“You’d do that for me?”

“I owe you… if getting tossed makes you feel better or helps this place somehow, it’s a price I’m willing to pay. Besides…” Fowl paused, frowning as he drummed his fingers on the stone bar. “We both know that I’m going to have a worse time when I go and see my family.”

“You’ve heard?”

“I have. How have they been?”

A fist came down on the bar, causing a few nearby tankards to wobble slightly.

“Without getting into the weeds, your father was about as pleasant as a thorn in one’s boot. After you left, he came here repeatedly, causing problems and blaming all this on my daughter. The guards had to come more than once.”

“You didn’t try and toss him?”

“Gods no,” Jataic replied. “That man has more strength than me and a higher constitution as well. You’ve seen his arms. Even upset, I’m not that dumb.”

“So what do I look like?”

Leaning against the counter, his belly providing a natural resting place, her dad grinned.

“Like the dwarf who ran off with my little girl. Sometimes a dwarf gets angry, and one forgets to use common sense.”

Snorting, Fowl nodded and picked up the tankard he had been drinking from.

“I’ve been accused of that many times. Still, I’m trying to get better.”

They nodded, each taking a long drink, eyes locked on the other until both tankards were empty and set down on the bar.

“That reminds me… your daughter…”

“Yes?”

Grinning, Fowl pulled out his trophy from winning the Peltagow drinking contest.

“I owe her dad for teaching me how to drink. I won this because of you. Perhaps it might serve as a small token of my appreciation.”

Thick, long fingers picked up the helmet that had been set on the bar, and Jataic lifted it to his face, inspecting its details.

“Dwarven made… good quality… seems like it was a legit tournament. I guess…” Pausing, he put the helm on his head. It barely fit on his oversized melon. “I’ll wear it with pride before putting it on the wall with all the other trophies I’ve won.”

Fowl howled with laughter, watching the helmet barely stay in place as Batrire’s father began to move behind the bar, twirling a few times and laughing as he did.

//Links

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/108248/power-hungry-a-mana-cultivation-litrpg

[L2]

[L3]

52 Chapter 381 - All Fowl Really Wants https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2117213/chapter-381-all-fowl-really-wants;[2025-03-10 14:02]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 381 - All Fowl Really Wants

A commotion from the door's entrance to the ale house ended as a dwarf barged through, pushing Ruggula out of the way as she tried to hold back the man.

Max was already on his feet, having left the booth as his Sonar picked up the name being shouted over and over.

"FOWL! FOWL HAMMERFALL!"

When the brown-haired dwarf came inside, he looked almost like a copy of their dwarven warrior, except with arms that were a few inches larger and covered in small burn marks. A patch of his beard was singed, yet those brown eyes scanned the room, shouting the name once more.

"Fowl Hammerfall!"

The room began to fall into silence, and Max saw his friend stand, eyes locked on the pair as the guard wrestled with no luck against the dwarf.

Jataic waved Ruggula away as Fowl moved from the bar and started walking toward the dwarf, who was now free from the woman who had been trying to hold him back.

"Heldon Hammerfall, what in the gods are you doing?!"

A frown appeared as the dwarf stormed across the room, weaving between the few benches and tables. He moved with a purpose, and those who were in his way, moved quickly out of it.

"Max," Tanila whispered.

"I'm on it," he replied, moving to stay close, coming from behind the dwarf.

"You dare return?! What is this nonsense I hear spreading around town of you being some tower climber and beating the 50th floor?!"

His words echoed across the room, and Fowl stood like a rock, unmoving from the position he had taken at the end of the table where Batrire and her mother had risen from.

"It's not a lie."

"That's a pot full of ogre shite, and you know it!"

Max saw Fowl shake his head at him slightly, causing the dwarf he was following to turn for a moment and glance at him.

“Boy, don’t mess with me, or I’ll thump you so hard you’ll wish there was a dwarf here who had just given birth so she could nurse you back to the living.”

Unable to help it, Max started to laugh. His eyes almost closed, and he held his chest.

“You think that’s funny?”

He sensed the dwarf Fowl was related to stop and now start moving toward him.

“I think you’re hilarious,” Max replied. “Perhaps the king is looking for a fool, and you might win the award this year.”

A gasp came from most in the room as the nearby dwarves started to back up.

Heldon reached him, a thick finger put against his shirt.

A scowl appeared as he pressed against Max, and nothing happened.

“I’m sorry, did your strength fail you?” he teased. “Fowl spoke about how great his family was at crafting and how strong they are. Perhaps you need to find a dwarf to nurse you and help you gain a little bit more strength and manners.”

The dwarf turned, his fist already formed and started to swing until Fowl’s hand caught his forearm and stopped him.

“Don’t. Trust me, brother. He’ll kill you with just a simple flick of his finger if he wants.”

“Let go of me, you traitor!”

Tugging his arm, Heldon tried to free himself from his brother’s grasp, but no matter how much he thrashed, even with all the muscles in his arm, Fowl didn’t move an inch.

“I’m going to warn you,” their warrior growled, pulling the dwarf close until his other hand grabbed him by the beard and yanked his face next to him. “Touch my friends, and I’ll forget you’re family, just like you forgot I’m family.”

“Let go of me!”

The shout was higher pitched, and the gruffness of it was gone as the smith realized he was unable to free himself. Max felt a twinge of sadness at the look on his friend’s face.

“You got this?”

“I do. Thank you. Now, if you’ll excuse me, my oldest brother and I need to have a conversation.”

Fowl began to move, dragging his brother by the arm and the beard until they got to the bench opposite Batrire and her mother.

“Sit, or I swear to Ockrim I’ll hold you down and shave every lick of hair off your head and face.”
“Who do you think you are?!”

“He’s an adventurer and someone able to kick your arse any day of the week,” Batrire said, interrupting the dwarf who was about to shout again. “Sit down, or I’ll let him beat you multiple times and heal you between them.”

A glare came from Heldon as his eyes fell upon Batrire.

“Bah, you’re the huss—”

A slap echoed across the room, and Max winced as he saw the smith stagger for a moment, until Fowl yanked him by the beard back to where he was holding him.

His free hand held a shaving blade, pressed against the dwarf’s beard, and a section was gone in a second.

“Speak like that again,” Fowl snarled in his brother’s face, “and your beard won’t be the only thing I cut off.”

A sigh came from Batrire, and a green glow surrounded Heldon, causing his legs to stiffen.

“You… you hit me? And cut my beard!”

“I did. Now sit, or I’ll do it again.”

Having stored the blade, Fowl shoved his brother down on the bench, still holding on to his brother’s brown beard.

“Jataic, get me some milk for this fool. Perhaps later he can grow up enough to drink like a real dwarf.”

Muted chuckles came from around the room, and the owner of the place whistled.

“Time to go. Everyone out unless you wish to not get a drop of my ale for the next month.”

A brief moment of the dwarves looking at each other ended as they all quickly filed toward the front door, soon leaving the once jam-packed room empty except for the eight of them.

Clearing his throat, Fowl nodded at the large dwarf and let go of his brother’s beard.

“Now, why have you come?”

Blinking a few times, Heldon stared up at him, using a hand as he massaged his chin and jaw.

“We… I heard you had returned. People were saying you threw Jataic and were a tower climber. But we both know that’s a load of—”

“It’s true,” Fowl said, equipping his entire outfit in a second. “We’ve passed the 50th floor and have only taken a break to come and announce our wedding.”

Coughing and sputtering, Heldon glanced across the table where Batrire had retaken her seat.

“Im… impossible… it’s been a year! No dwarf, human, or elf can level that fast!”

Sighing, Fowl rubbed his eyes and sat on the same bench a few feet from his brother.

“Do you listen to news, rumors, or stories at all?”

A scoff came, and then the smith frowned and nodded.

“Only a fool wouldn’t listen to the news.”

“And yet one sits there,” Norhalin said. “Seems it runs through the veins of a lot of dwarves today.”

Jataic coughed as he sat down a tiny cup filled with milk.

“Do you know the name Seth Pendal?”

Narrowing his eyes at the cup and then at his brother, Heldon nodded.

“We’ve heard the stories…. The news… about a—”

He stopped himself, turning till he could see Max still standing there, arms crossed, a slightly evil grin on his face.

Color began to disappear from the smith’s face as he swallowed, and an unsteady hand reached out, grabbing the cup near him and taking a drink.

Heldon coughed and spat it out, earning a chuckle from Batrire’s father.

“Mahu… he… Seth… that’s him?!’

The babbling Heldon was doing was comical as Fowl nodded slowly.

“Yes… the man you were about to punch is the very one who cleared four floors of the tower in hours. He is the same man I have partied with for almost a year. We are past the 50th floor, and if there wasn’t the slightest hope in my heart that Mom and Dad might take me back, I would allow him to do to you what you deserve.”

“He’d be flagged!”

Fowl began to howl with laughter.

“You think he cares about that? Who here could stop him? Who would be stupid enough to try and fight him?!”

Max couldn’t help but chuckle as his friend spoke highly of him, moving till he was able to sit down on the bench closest to the smith.

“Oh, I wouldn’t have killed him,” he replied. “I might have shaved him from head to toe if you said it was okay. Then perhaps he wouldn’t have hairy ones anymore.”

Red coloring filled his cheeks, and Heldon started to sputter again.

“But… that means you’re…”

The dwarf never finished his words, the cup of milk falling to the floor as he passed out.

Max moved quickly, helping Fowl to catch his brother before he slid off the bench and onto the floor.

“Is he okay?”

Sighing, their warrior nodded and gently lowered his brother to the ground.

“I think he just realized how close to death or being completely bald like you all over he was. For some, that might do just this.”

Laughing, Max nodded, pulling a flask of water out of storage.

“You want to do this or me?”

Fowl grinned and shook his head.

“I’ll do it… he might pass out if you do what I know you’re thinking of.”

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Sputtering, Heldon sat up and saw his brother adjusting his pants.

“Is this—”

“Water, now get off the ground and act like the dwarf Mom and Dad most likely left in charge of the forge… unless of course, they left Thanwuna as the boss.”

A scowl appeared as he wiped his wet beard and climbed up off the ground.

“I’m in charge,” he muttered. “To suggest otherwise—”

“Means you act like a fool all the time,” Fowl stated, holding a tankard out to him. “Now drink, and then we can talk. Don’t mistake my tone as one who doesn’t remember how you treated me when I left.”

Shifting on the bench, Heldon quickly took a long drink and set the tankard down on the table.

No one said a word as he stared at Fowl, his jaw moving and yet no words coming out.

“I did mistreat you. Mom and Dad—”

“Didn’t force you to behave like that.”

Wincing, he bobbed his head once.

“They did not… I chose to act like that. I… am sorry.”

Clearing his throat, Fowl grabbed his drink and found it empty.

Batrire slid hers over to him, and he finished it off, wiping the foam on his beard away with the back of his hand.

“You’re fine. How are Thanwuna and Motak?”

“Busy… we’ve all been busy since Mom and Dad took Grondir and went to the capital. Everyone in town wants us to make something even if they don’t need it. Would you believe how many dwarves come by and try to buy a weapon because of the stamp it bears but don’t want to pay the price for such a thing?”

Chuckling, Fowl nodded.

“I guess the adventurers here are still active?”
“Things have been busy in the dungeons. Which is good for business,” Heldon stated. “Of course, most don’t consider doing what… what you have done. How? How can you be that far along?”

Their warrior glanced at Batrire and then at Max, now noticing that Tanila and Cordellia had moved closer and joined them.

“I’m in an amazing group. We could lie and say it’s not been hard, but there have been a few times where most of us have almost died at least once.”

“And the tower? Is it like they say it is?”

“Dangerous? Exciting? Full of treasure?”

“Yes!”

Grinning, Fowl nodded.

“All it takes is leaving the safety of a forge and going out and learning to become a warrior. Surely you could be willing to do that.”

A scoff came, and the dwarf rubbed a hand against one of his oversized arms.

“No… I’ve never been that brave. You know that. Whatever Mom and Dad tell me to do… I do it.”

“Some of us wanted more… or at least had the balls to try for it.”

Sighing, Heldon picked up his tankard and stared into it.

“I’m sorry again, brother… for… for all of the things I said and did.”

Max watched as Fowl stood up and moved to where his brother was and gave him a gentle slap on the arm.

“Don’t worry, I’m over it. Part of what made me who I am is how I was treated. Now, if you think you can manage it, can I go to the forge and see my brother and sister?”

Draining the last of the dregs of his tankard, Heldon set it on the table and stood.

“I owe you that… Mom and Dad be damned. Ready to come home?”

A few tears formed in Fowl’s eyes.

“That’s all I ever wanted.”

//Links

//[2025-03-11 14:02]

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/108300/arcanist-in-another-world-an-archmagus-isekai

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[L2]

[L3]

53 Chapter 382 - A Small Re-Union https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2119644/chapter-382-a-small-re-union;[2025-03-11 14:02]

Chapter 382 - A Small Re-Union

The *forge* they came to wasn't like any Max had seen or visited before.

He had grown accustomed to open blacksmith areas like the one in Windsor Wheel. Many of the shops and forges in his hometown were like that, allowing the natural wind to sweep through the workspace.

Even in Peltagow, Zach's weapon crafting place had been somewhat open to the elements.

Only inside the Faction's crafting area had he witnessed the power of magical exhaust systems and rune-controlled forges, but none of those compared to where he now stood.

The Hammerfall forge, like Batrire's family's ale house, was a monument to a family dedicated to one task.

Half a dozen dwarves had been outside, working on a new building, where it was obvious an older one had been at some point.

A whole block was dedicated to this place, and part of the stone wall surrounding the property was newer.

The four stone buildings that he could see only had one large warehouse door on the side facing him, and big windows lined the upper two-thirds of the building.

A collection of stone exhaust systems on each roof gave off small puffs of white smoke that quickly vanished upon escaping the facility.

"How many crafting areas are there?" Max asked as Heldon led them across the open area, occasionally shouting at different dwarves who were either working on the new construction or directing carts with ore in them.

Clearing his throat, the muscle-bound dwarf frowned for a moment.

"There are two main buildings, that one and that one," he said, pointing at the two in the middle of the four. "The one on the left is for weapons, and the one on the right is

for armor. Only those who have passed a certain crafting level can work in them. Anyone else who wishes to become an armor or weapon crafter must create a certain level of quality for a set period of time. Just having the skill isn't enough, as some depend too much upon what the skill offers. Many don't bother learning other tricks that help make something truly great."

"Those other two buildings are where most of the ore is smelted and new smiths get a chance to earn the easy experience before it all dries up," Fowl stated as his brother motioned for someone to come to where they were standing.

"Lord Hammerfall," a young dwarf whose beard was only about six inches in length said as he bowed.

"Bah, stop using that title… I'm not my dad, and I don't get it. Now, are my sister and brothers still working?"

Green eyes darted from Heldon and fell upon Fowl, both of them widening as he glanced back and forth at the pair.

"Mizeran…"

"Forgive me Lo… Heldon. They are still where you left them. Is this—"

"It is. Now stop standing around with your mouth open or flies will find a new home. This is my brother Fowl, and the rumors are true."

Coughing, the younger dwarf started to choke, his blond braided hair bouncing with each one.
Sighing, Fowl's brother pointed at the middle building on the right. "Come, let's go find them and have a family reunion that is long overdue."

Without waiting for a response, Heldon started to stride toward the open warehouse door, and they all moved to quickly catch up.

"How long has it been since you've been home?" Max asked as he walked beside his friend.

"Over a year… almost a year and six months," Fowl replied. "I… I've dreamed of this day, and yet it feels strange having it come so soon."

"When did you expect it to come?"

"Never? Five years? Maybe ten?"

"Ignore him," Batrire muttered, holding tightly to her dwarf's arm. "He's a bit of a pessimist and often told me that he wasn't certain he could ever earn enough of a reputation that his parents would have to let him back. With them gone and his brother in charge, things will not be as stressful for now."

"But if they return?"

Tanila's hip bumped into him, and she shook her head.

"Sorry… I don't mean to pry."

Fowl sighed and shook his head.

“You’re fine, Max,” he stated and then smiled. “I owe you for this moment no matter what you say. Without you… and your gift and friendship, I’m certain there wouldn’t be a chance of me returning at all.”

The sound of hammers on metal began to reach Max’s ears and Sonar as they followed the oldest brother of the Hammerfall family, and the noise that came from within was not as loud as he expected.

“Silencing runes?”

Grinning, Fowl nodded.

“When your life involves the constant beating of metal, one does what they can to prevent the loss of hearing. In the old days, it wasn’t uncommon for a dwarf who did what my family did to be almost deaf.”

Shapes began to appear as they approached the fifteen-foot open doors, and inside was a world Max couldn’t wait to explore.

Rows of forges with systems he recognized were lined up along one wall, giant exhaust systems carrying anything they gave off up and out of the building.

Black stone lined the floor, and he wasn’t certain whether it had become this color from what had happened or if it had been chosen initially because, eventually, it would turn this shade.

After the forges, rows of perfectly placed anvils were placed a distance away, tables with different clamps were placed, and other stations were set up for working the crafted weapons.

On the opposite side of the building were racks and rows of sections designed to craft the other part of a weapon. Wood, bone, metal, leather, and many other materials his skill recognized were all set up. Dozens of dwarves were working on different shafts, handles, and more. Each of them focused on the tools and objects they were crafting.

Most had not noticed the small group that had just entered the workshop.

However, in the middle were two dwarves, with their hair tied back and wearing beard protection, inspecting a sword.

They looked up as Heldon led everyone to where they were standing, a stone table with a few other weapons lying on top it.

Both looked at each other and then quickly set down the sword, racing around the barrier between them and their brothers.

“Fowl!”

Max watched as a stout dwarf ran to where their warrior stood, arms spread wide.

“Thanwuna!”

He recognized the name as Fowl’s sister and watched as she jumped into his arms and he hugged her, spinning around a few times before setting her back on her feet, laughing and smiling.

“You’ve grown! Look at the size of your arms!”

“Bah! These puny things?” she replied, holding up both arms and flexing, making Max realize just how small his arms were compared to the dwarves.

“It’s okay, I still love you, small arms and all,” Tanila whispered as she leaned closer.

The other dwarf had slowed down and stood about four feet away, frowning slightly as he nodded at Fowl.

“Motak. It’s good to see you.”

“It’s good to see you as well… is it true?”

“That when I fart I shoot lightning out of my arse?”

Chuckling, the other dwarf shook his head and finally smiled.

“The rumors… they’re true?”

“Aye. Ask Heldon if you need to. He’ll vouch for what I claim.”

Clearing his throat, the oldest brother nodded slowly.

“Only Ockrim knows how, but our brother is a tower climber… and he appears to have passed the 50th floor.”

A whooshing sound came as both siblings breathed out loudly and tried to catch their breath.
“The 50th floor?! Already? How?!”

“How about I tell that story later when it’s just us,” Fowl replied. “Let me introduce to you my other family first.”

He turned and motioned to them all.

“You all know Batrire.”

The pair nodded and waved at her.

“You’ve gotten so tall,” Thanwuna said with a grin. “Easily the same height as our short brother.”

All five dwarves started to laugh, and Max found himself studying their heights. None were that tall, especially compared to Jataic or even most of the other dwarves he had been around.

Motak pointed at him.

“He doesn’t get it. Perhaps you should explain to your human friend what it means.”

“Bah, maybe later,” Fowl muttered. “Still, that is Max… he is known by Seth Pendal, Conqueror of the Colosseum and the one who defeated four tower floors in just a few hours.”

Motak’s smile vanished, and his outstretched finger started to tremble.

“He… he’s in your party?”

“And he’s my half-brother. Unfortunately, he can’t grow a beard, but I still love him.”

Both of the dwarves gave a slight bow, which Max returned.

“Our tallest elf is Cordellia, skilled with a bow, a voice like a dwarf with his nuts in a vise.”

“I’ll stick your balls in a vise,” their ranger replied with a scowl.

Laughter came from the two newest siblings, and Cordellia sighed, giving their dwarven warrior the middle finger.

“Oh, I like her,” Thanwuna stated. “Reminds me of your voice when you were young.”

After her last statement, Fowl’s sister covered her mouth and trembled.

“Your… birthday… we—”

“It’s okay, sis,” he said, moving and touching her shoulder. “Max and the others threw me a party far greater than I could have imagined. Not only did they help me reach level 50 on my birthday, but they also had a warehouse filled with drunk dwarves, a live band, and a donkey!”

All three of his siblings turned and looked at Max. Blinking a few tears away, his sister moved first, holding out her calloused hand to him.

“Thank you… for doing what we couldn’t.”

Shaking it, feeling the roughness of her skin, Max shrugged and motioned to Batrire.

“I can’t get all the credit. She’s the one who found all the dwarves in Peltagow and promised them free alcohol. Batrire also was the one who told me about the donkey.”

Chuckling, she nodded and moved to where Batrire was and hugged her.

“Now tell me, is that a ring I see on your finger?”

Their healer’s cheeks turned red as she smiled, beaming and holding it up for Thanwuna to inspect.

“I think she’s got points in intelligence,” Max muttered.

“I do,” Fowl’s sister stated, taking Batrire’s hand and inspecting the ring. “Gods, this thing must have cost a fortune. Who knew our little brother could afford such nice things.”

“Perks of climbing the tower. Now tell me, when did you get so many other smiths?”

Motak grunted and pointed at the table they had come from.

“After we won the king’s seal, we couldn’t keep up with the demand. Every Hufflenut and Bumbeldor wants a damn weapon! Even if it’s just a fricking knife!”

“What our brother is trying to say,” Heldon said as he motioned around the building, “is that we’re making so much money we had to hire anyone in town willing to work

for us. It turns out that upset a few of the other families, but none would pass up the opportunity to be part of something with the king’s seal on it.”

“What quality of weapons are you mainly producing?” Tanila asked.

“Uncommon and rare stuff mostly,” Motak replied. “Only a few in town could afford anything of epic quality, and we’d have to order the materials for something like that.”

“Then how did Mom and Dad win the contest?”

All three frowned at the same time, each of them mimicking the other with a low growl.

“Not a conversation for in here,” Heldon said as he pointed at the table. “Let me see what’s been done, and once all the work is completed, we can return to the family house.”

Motioning for everyone to move, he led the way to the weapons waiting for inspection.

“You’re like a kid in a candy store,” Tanila informed Max. “You’re practically skipping.”

He pretended to giggle and tapped all his fingers together while grinning.

“You know me too well, my love. Now all I need to do is convince them to let me have a turn.”

She grabbed his sleeve and stopped him, letting a little space form between them and the others.

“Don’t do that… this isn’t about you. Fowl’s finally out of your shadow for a moment. Sure, they can figure out we all are as strong as we are because of you, but don’t make this harder by crafting when he can’t.”

Nodding, Max sighed and gave her a quick kiss.

“I love you… thank you for reminding me not to be an idiot.”

Frowning for a moment, she then winked at him.

“Even with all that intelligence… you’re still a man…”

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54 Chapter 383 - The Problem with Dwarven Towns

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2119737/chapter-383-the-problem-with-dwarven-towns;[2025-03-11 15:02]

Chapter 383 - The Problem with Dwarven Towns

“Those four are going to be up all night,” Tanila informed Max as she snuggled down into his armpit. “I can’t remember seeing Fowl ever smiling that much in a single day.”

“You know what would be better?”

“What?”

“A longer bed,” Max replied. “My feet are touching the end, and I know yours would hang off if your leg weren’t draped over mine.”

“Is that a complaint?” she asked.

“Oh no, I’m just saying one doesn’t think about the size difference between the races sometimes. Poor Cordellia must be curled up in a ball to fit on that bed they gave her.”

A finger poked him in the side, and he could sense Tanila’s jaws clenching.

“Please tell me you’re not talking about how another woman is sleeping while I’m here lying next to you.”

“Have you noticed that Fowl has gotten smarter since we got here, and I’ve become an idiot?”

“Yes,” she replied, not laughing at his obvious joke.

“Forgive me… I wasn’t thinking before I spoke.”

“Obviously.”

“Well, the good news is I found a place in town where I can get us a room that has a normal-sized bed. Some local humans run it for moments such as this.”

“That’s a nice change of subject,” Tanila muttered. “Still, I won’t complain if they don’t mind if we leave their family home.”

“Which is way smaller and not fancy at all,” Max stated. “I mean… it’s like got twenty bedrooms, a giant eating area, and a lot of other spaces for gathering, but none of it feels… regal. Expensive?”

“Odds are they aren’t rich yet,” Tanila said as she shifted slightly to get comfortable. “All the money they make is spent on upgrading the property. It also explains how and why his parents made the gamble they did.”

Max nodded even in the darkness of their room.

“To think they leveraged everything they had to purchase those supplies. Had Fowl known, he could have gotten some of the materials from our Faction, or we could have possibly farmed them.”

“But he didn’t, which is why his brothers and sister were upset with his parents.”

Max knew she was right, but something still felt off.

“How could an epic weapon win a competition? I mean... surely someone in this kingdom can craft legendary items.”

Tanila moved her head slightly, signaling she agreed with his thought.

“Fowl’s oldest brother did seem a bit surprised by the fact they had won, but then again, their youngest brother, Grondir, does have a starting weapon crafting skill higher than usual. That is rare, even among elves.”

“How so,” he asked.

“We both know that your sister getting the skills she did wasn’t by chance. For two members of the same family, outside of nobles or someone of my bloodline, that doesn’t happen.”

“Like ever?”

Sitting up, Tanila nodded.

“Never. I doubt there has been a recorded incident of anything like that on the elf side since I have been alive. Such a thing would draw the attention of my father.”

“So you think perhaps this is what caused Fowl’s family to win this event? That the king or someone within his court orchestrated this entire contest just to bring the dwarf into the capital?”

“Again, my kingdom is different. My father would simply command the family to bring their child. No one would protest, and many would consider it a great honor to be brought before him. All would see it as a blessing from her.

“Here, the dwarves are different. Their customs and behavior aren’t so one-sided. Yes, the king has power, but he doesn’t rule like my father or your people do. It is more of a father figure, and one must be careful how they potentially play favorites.”

Max sat up, grunting as he slid his bare back against the headboard, ignoring the designs he knew that were carved into it.

Perhaps someone is keeping an eye on your dwarven warrior. As Tanila has said, the odds are that someone would note his skills and his younger brother. How hard would it be for them to track his progress and growth?

“Max?”

Realizing he had reacted to what Bob had just said, he tried to relax slightly.

“Um… Bob just mentioned something, and it makes sense. Would someone be able to track Fowl’s progress and growth?”

He heard her tsking her tongue.

“The adventurers guild would most likely share that knowledge with someone from the king’s court if requested. For so long I wondered if someone was tracking your information but then again, unless one knew to request it, no one would have until after you started causing problems in the capital.”

“So then… could someone be making a move not just on Fowl’s family but on him as well?”

Placing her back against the headboard and leaning against him, Tanila snorted.

Max then groaned as he suddenly knew what Bob was about to say.

“And that means Batrire’s family might also be part of this. Them winning that trophy…”

Grunting, she gently jabbed his arm as she shook her head slightly.

“What kind of mess are we involved in? Is this your fault?”

“Bah, don’t blame me! I’m just the poor baker who got mixed up in a game some crazy gods are playing at. Thankfully, one was nice enough to send me you to keep me from going crazy.”

Kissing his shoulder, she grinned and then playfully bit it.

“Yeah… that’s my job, to keep the human with a black skill from going crazy.”

“Someone has to do it,” Max replied, trying to sound playful as he considered the web he felt caught in.

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Fowl

“So what’s the plan? Go track down Mom and Dad and then what? Come back here to get married?”

Batrire shook her head as Fowl shrugged at his sister.

“No. We’re going to have it in the capital. My parents are already getting things taken care of with the brewery. He says my uncle has been dying to be in charge, and once we leave, they will head that way in a week.”

“A week?!” Thanwuna exclaimed. “How can one hope to have anything planned in a week? It took a year for Heldon’s wife to get everything planned out when they married.”

“That’s because she is a…” Fowl stopped himself, glancing around the room and noticing the look on his oldest brother’s face. “Someone who wanted things to be perfect.”

Heldon snorted and held up his middle finger.

“You can say it, but I’ll have to tell her what you called her. Just know she’ll come over here with a bar of soap in hand, and I won’t be able to stop her.”

All five dwarves chuckled a bit, and as they sat in wooden chairs pulled up around a fire pit that was mostly embers now, they seemed content.

“I’ve missed this more than words can convey,” Fowl said slowly. “Not being here… not getting to see you all… wondering if I would ever get a chance to sit in the gathering room. All this is a dream come true.”

“Well, it’s your own damn fault,” Motak teased. “You just had to be a fighter. Still, it appears you made the right choice, little brother.”

“Bah, I can kick your arse now!”

“Oh gods, they’re going to compare sizes again,” their sister bemoaned. “Tell me he isn’t like this with your party?”

Batrire sighed and bobbed her head, slowly turning the mug of ale she held.

“Sometimes worse… him and Max—”

“Why did he go by Seth Pendal?” Heldon asked, cutting her off. “If his name is Max, why change it?”

“It’s a long story and not mine to share,” she replied. “Just know he’s probably the kindest human, dwarf, elf, or anything else I’ve ever met in all this world.”

“Yet the stories of what he did in the Colosseum… how can—”

“What would you do to protect your family from a threat?” Fowl asked.

Motak winced at that question, his face looking pained.

“Forgive me… I… I guess I can understand a little bit. Still… I guess I’m grateful you all have him. The way you all joke and talk about each other makes me feel better, knowing you had a family this whole time.”

Fowl smiled and nodded, holding his hand out across the small gap and squeezing Batrire’s when she placed hers in his.

“I am grateful for that. Ockrim does love me. But I can’t stay. We really need to leave in a day or two at the most.”

“What?” Heldon asked, sitting forward in his chair. “You just got here! I mean… it’s…”
The oldest brother motioned with a hand at his siblings.

“We all missed you, and if I’m honest it wasn’t easy obeying Mom and Dad’s orders. Still, why leave so quickly, knowing what you’ve become and that there is no way they can deny Ockrim’s hand upon your life?”

Taking a deep breath, Fowl looked at Batrire and smiled.

“Let’s just say there are lots of commitments we still have to keep. There is also a tower that we need to finish climbing.”

Gasps came from the three Hammerfalls, and all of them stared at him wide-eyed.

“You can’t be serious! The stories of how many die! Why risk it?!”

Squeezing Batrire’s hand again, he let go and then leaned forward, setting the empty cup he was holding onto the stone surrounding the fire pit.

He then rose and gave each of his brothers and his sister a hard look.

“Would each of you stop crafting the moment you leveled your skill to the next? And before you say there is no danger in what we do, that missing patch of hair on your chin proves my point.”

Heldon closed his mouth and reached up, touching the bald spot where some had been burnt off.

“Trust me when I say this group of ours will defeat the tower. One day we will complete something no one else has ever done. When we do… I’m not sure how our lives will change but no matter what, you’ll be able to say you were kin to the dwarf with the biggest balls in the family.”

As he spoke the last line, Fowl puffed out his chest and thrust his hips forward.

Groans came from all four and Thanwuna tossed her cup at him.

“Bah we all know Mom’s got the biggest pair, so stop trying to compete with them.”

Laughing at the cup that bounced off him and the fact he knew his sister was right, Fowl shrugged.

“Regardless, I’m absolutely certain we will defeat the tower.”

He watched as his family all stared at him, each of their faces twisting and contorting differently.

“Just be safe,” Thanwuna said quietly. “I just got you back. I don’t want to lose you again.”

He held his arms out and faced her, and she stood and came to him, the two of them sharing an embrace he had missed for so long.

“Bah, I’ll admit I missed you as well,” Motak stated as he jumped up and joined in the group hug.

A few seconds passed, and a fourth dwarf, followed by a fifth, crowded around, each of them patting a back or shoulder. The group chuckled.

“I’ve missed this… more than you can imagine,” Fowl whispered.

“We can imagine,” Heldon replied. “It’s like a part of us was cut off… the ugly part, but still everyone knows you need that piece to be whole.”

Laughter erupted as their bodies shook, none wanting to break the embrace. Their joyful noise filled the room.

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55 Chapter 384 - The Power Inside a Dragon

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2121659/chapter-384-the-power-inside-a-dragon;[2025-03-12 14:02]

Chapter 384 - The Power Inside a Dragon

Having secured a room at the tavern run by the local “humans,” as Fowl and all the dwarves called them, Max left Tanila in the room to find a local rancher. He needed to find some cows and keep a promise he had made.

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I was wondering when you would return.

Max scratched Rakonath’s head, grinning like a fool, needing both hands to accomplish the desired job.

“You’ve grown… so much.”

It is the—

“Speak out loud. Use your voice,” Aerthen commanded, not using her humanoid form, as only Max had come. “You must practice it to get the right inflections and tones.”

Clearing his throat, the silver dragon who had grown stood almost ten feet tall now, his body having doubled in size in the weeks Max had been away.

“I… have grown because of the power of the one you fed me. Do not get me wrong, those two cows you just brought were delicious, but I am still trying to digest the elf woman and all that she had on her.”

“Both of us are grateful for the cows. It has been a long time since I have been able to enjoy one.”

Grinning, Max stood back and watched how the dragon he was bound to moved.

The gait that had been off balance and sometimes uncoordinated was gone, each step in the perfect position.

“I can’t lie. The dwarf was a bit hesitant to sell me four with nothing but a rope to lead them by. Thankfully, my storage space fit them all, even if it wasn’t a comfortable moment for them.

“Worse than the moment I ate them?”

Chuckling, Max bobbed his head.

“I guess they might have preferred that. Still, how much bigger are you going to get?”

Rakonath glanced up at Aerthen, who snorted and sent out a little gust of smoke and snot.

“Even I do not know that, so he has no idea. I guess he may double in size again in a month or so. Hopefully, he will be able to digest all that power soon.”

Raising an eyebrow, Max cocked his head and looked up at the red dragon.

“Because…”

“You do not want to see this… trust me.”

“I doubt there is much you could show me that would gross me out. My dwarven friend… he wouldn’t make it, but I’ve had the very flesh melted from my body, and most of it turned to stone. Trust me, I don’t cringe easily.”

A low thrum came as her golden eyes blinked twice, and then she began to retch.

Small streams of fire would occasionally come from her mouth, bouncing off the stone floor until it formed a puddle.

Max felt he might have overestimated his opinion of himself. He watched the dragon gag on something for a solid minute before a large glowing orb, easily his size, appeared between her teeth.

She lowered it to the floor slowly, letting it rest in the puddle of flickering flames.

“What in the gods is that?”

“My treasure. Unlike some who hoard things in chests or hide them, I choose to form what we call a power orb.”

Aerthen lifted her front paw and tapped a single claw against the shimmering pearl-like object, causing it to radiate with an orange glow that almost felt warm, even though he was a good fifty yards from it.

“In here are all the magical items I have eaten, and for me, something of this size is still difficult to bring up. Right now Rakonath is having one form inside him. Perhaps in time he can learn to break it down and turn it into power, helping him grow stronger, but that is a lesson many years down the road.”

“She means decades,” the silver dragon added.

“But what can that do? I mean… I sense magical energy coming from it, but how would someone like myself or a different race hope to use that?”

A loud thrum came, and the red dragon shook her head,

“You people… always wanting to know how to use something so precious to us dragons. Still, your question is a valid one. There are many ways to drain this of the power that resides inside. Whoever has that knowledge would trade greatly for this, and if word got out that I had one like this, they might risk coming to try and take it.”

Max’s eyes felt as if they were being led by a string to stare at the orb.

She is correct. I can detect waves of power coming off it. Everett or any other Faction would gladly take this and use the magic that resides within. You can even use this if you look at the real potential.

As Bob spoke, Max began to see it, suddenly realizing what his skill had led him to.

“A magical power core…”

“What did you call it?” Aerthen asked, her talons wrapping around it completely and pulling it closer to her. “How do you know its name?!”

“I… I have a skill that lets me use them for weapons.”

The dragon’s jaw fell open, and Max could sense a smug smile on Rakonath’s snout. The silver dragon almost appeared to puff out its chest slightly.

“Our Father was wise to grant me a human with such strength.”

“Quiet, eggling!” the red dragon snapped. She lowered her head, bringing it close to Max until her snout was just a few feet away. “How do you have such a skill?! To my knowledge that one no longer exists on this world.”

“We’ve talked before, and you know I’m not like others,” Max replied. “Do not worry, I don’t want it, but I now understand the potential of such a thing. I will not go around my world and tell everyone about what you have. One last question, though, if you don’t mind.”

A grunt came, and Aerthen slowly pulled her head back from him.

“Part of me wants to say no, but the other part of me is curious. Go ahead.”

Scratching his ear for a moment, Max nodded.

“If, and I’m not asking for it or telling you I’m going to take it, but if, a dragon loses that, what happens to them?”

A guttural growl reverberated off the ground, and her neck vibrated as she stared at him.

“For me to lose one of this size would be… painful. I am able to draw nourishment and power from it. Not having it inside me means I could not defend myself to my full potential. It is like… an extra helping of mana in a way. The dragon you defeated. The gold one, how long did it take to wear them out, exhaust their mana supply?”

Max huffed and looked off in the distance, staring at a stone wall and remembering the fight with Igarra.

“Too long. For a moment, I wasn’t certain I could ever make her run out of mana.”

She had one of these inside her. I was just like that. Using the power that is stored within you.

“Then it would appear that she used up hers,” Aerthen replied. “She was trying to draw upon the power and outlast you. If you were able to make one of her size run dry…”

A shudder ran through her, and the red dragon flinched slightly.

“Perhaps our Father was right in choosing to mark you.”

“I told you,” Rakonath stated.

Aerthen moved her head near the silver dragon and huffed, sending snot all over him.

“That is not fair!”

“And you must learn to be silent when one does not need to provoke someone bigger than you.”

“I… you are right. Sorry. When he is near, I sometimes feel… weird. Like I should say things that are supposed to be funny.”

“A joke,” Max said.

Rakonath glanced at Max, and his silver eyes sparkled.

“Yes! A joke!”

Twisting his neck, the silver dragon looked up at Aerthen.

“Was what I said a good joke?”

“Not to one who can do what I did,” replied the older dragon.

Max couldn’t help himself, having held back the laughter that begged to come out.

As he started to laugh, Rakonath began to trill and then thrum. Soon, Aerthen joined in, and for a moment, all three found themselves enjoying a quick respite.

Clearing her throat, the older dragon widened her jaw and put the orb back in her mouth, then lifting her head wide, she slowly started to swallow the giant object.

Max stood there, amazed at how easily she appeared to swallow the orb, thankful that Fowl wasn’t here to say anything.

She only choked twice before the bulge in her throat vanished and she coughed.

“Now, back to your question. If Rakonath was to lose the one that he is forming, it might slow his growth, but it wouldn’t be as costly because the power it contains will be less impactful at his age.

“He will have more opportunities if I am correct, to eat people and magical items. If you really want to help him grow, find items he can consume.”

Grinning at her choice of words, Max nodded.

“And the more powerful they are, the better.”

“Correct.”

Drool began to drip from the silver dragon’s lips, and his tongue flicked out for a moment.

“I would enjoy trying some new items. She has instructed me on how each of them tastes slightly different.”

Activating his dimensional storage, Max began to peruse the things he had stored inside.

He found a chest he had taken from Igarra’s stash and done nothing with yet, knowing that the items inside would be useful for some new Faction members who were starting off.

Setting the wooden chest on the ground caused Rakonath to sniff the air, bringing his snout close to the chest.

“He can smell it… is that… normal?”

A thrum came from Aerthen, who nodded her head.

“Dragons are quite adept at sensing magic. Again, you and your party are a tasty treat if I was so inclined to want to feed. You especially ripple with power, and if it wasn’t for my ability to sense the danger you present, our meeting might have gone differently, even with that mark from our Father.”

“Good to know,” Max replied as he bent down and opened the chest.

Inside were a pair of swords with +10 to Strength and Constitution, both good for many different warriors. He wanted to see how his dragon would respond to them.

Holding one in each hand, their black blades with the red hilts looked menacing, but beyond the two stat bonuses, he almost considered them worthless.

“Interested in sampling one?”

Rakonath was almost vibrating, moving from side to side and trilling.

“I would be delighted to see how they taste!”

Shaking his head, Max pulled one back.

“We’re going to share. It’s the least I can do for Aerthen since she is helping you so much.”

The trill stopped for a moment and then resumed, just slightly quieter than before.

“You are correct. She should get one. Forgive me for being selfish.”

Chuckling, Max tossed the sword in his left hand onto the stone floor near the red dragon. Then he moved to where Rakonath was and set the sword on the ground before him.

“Enjoy!”

Both dragons quickly used their tongues to pick up the weapons, and Max watched, waiting to see how this would work.

The crunching sound came as the silver dragon started chewing on the metal, almost making a face as if he were working at breaking the object between his teeth.

Aerthen had already swallowed her sword like a champ, her golden eyes fixated on the younger dragon struggling with his.

“Bite near the hilt. It will snap off the blade and make it easier to swallow. In time you will be able to do what I did.”

Rakonath adjusted the blade. The larger section of the sword stuck out from his teeth, and a bite caused the blade to fall to the ground, clattering against the stone.

Thrumming, the silver dragon quickly swallowed the hilt and bent his neck, once more picking the blade up off the stone.

“That is a sight to behold,” Max said as he picked up the chest and stored it. “As much as I want to stay and spend more time with you two, I need to return to my friends. I’ll see if I can’t bring you both a treat the next time I come in a week or two.”

Choking on the blade, Rakonath spat it out, leaving it on the ground as he moved to where Max stood.

“Thank you again. It is easier to sense you now, even though you are farther away than before. Being able to do that provides me a little comfort. Tell me, can you do the same?”

Shaking his head, Max reached out and scratched the scales under his wet jaw.

“No… I wish I could, but perhaps in time, it will happen. Right now when I’m close I can, but the moment I leave, it’s like something blocks you from me.”

“Give it time, you two,” Aerthen said. “As you both grow, the bond should become stronger as well. Perhaps the more time spent together, the quicker it will grow.”

“Then I’ll have to make a point to come as often as I can and spend a little more time with you.”

Rakonath pushed his head past Max’s shoulder and drew close, wrapping his body against him.

“Hurry back and be safe.”

The silver dragon stepped back, and Max could have sworn he saw what looked like water forming at the edges of its eyes.

“I shall. Grow strong, my friend.”

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Chapter 385 - Discussions in a Carriage

“How is he doing?” Tanila asked as Max appeared in the room she was sitting in.

“You didn’t even flinch?”

“I knew you were going to return in a few, and besides, who else would use a purple portal to magically show up in a random tavern in a random town in the dwarf kingdom?”

Nodding, he moved to where she was sitting and leaned over to give her a kiss on her head.

“Rakonath has grown… like doubled in size. All in just two weeks. Aerthen says he might double again in the coming month or two.”

“Really? That quickly? I’m guessing it’s because of what he ate?”

Taking a chair out of his dimensional storage, Max turned it backward and leaned against the chair, as he sat just a few feet from her.

“Yes. I even gave both of them a magical sword I had collected from Igarra. Both of them were excited to eat them, and I learned that dragons have a magical core that grows inside them. It is formed from the creatures and items they eat.”

Tanila had already closed her book and had been holding it on her lap, but now she stored it and retrieved a journal he had seen her writing in occasionally. Next came a pencil, and she jotted down a quick note.

“Would I be correct in saying that the more they eat, the stronger and larger they can become?”

Max shrugged.

“I’m not sure it’s that simple. Aerthen said he needed time to digest what he had eaten. Someone as powerful as Riniya isn’t the normal meal for a dragon, especially one his age. Right now, she isn’t certain how long it will be before she has completely absorbed it. She is worried that if I continue to feed him items and people like her, he will actually suffer.”

“And those cows?” she asked, looking up for a moment from her journal.

“Useful but not as necessary. Which makes me wonder if all those stories I heard as a kid were simply just that… stories. I don’t suppose there were any books you read on dragons back home.”

Shaking her head, Tanila jotted down a few notes and stored her book.

“The ones in my father’s library were nothing more than stories like what you most likely heard. He might have some with facts about dragons, but I don’t have access to a private stash I know he keeps hidden away somewhere.”

Rising to his feet, he stored his chair and held out his hand.

“I’m guessing we need to hurry back to Fowl’s place. We’re supposed to leave in a few hours.”

Taking his hand, Tanila rose and drew close to him.

“You’ve behaved yourself better than I thought. Perhaps I can reward you later once we get to the capital.”

Kissing her deeply for a moment, Max laughed as he looked up into her eyes.

“I should learn to behave more often.”

***

Fowl and his siblings all stood there in a circle, one large dwarven group hug, each of them whispering to each other.

A few yards away was Batrire with her mother and father, doing the same thing, except she was sandwiched between the pair, looking like the force of Jataic’s embrace might crush her.

“Dwarves are a bit… touchier than I imagined,” Cordellia stated as she stood next to Max and Tanila. “I mean… those two couldn’t keep their hands off each other, but most dwarves didn’t show this kind of affection in the city.”

“Family is different,” their mage replied. “You’d be surprised to see how much affection is displayed, especially between the parents and a young dwarf.”

“Like what? Twenty years or less?”

Both women looked at Max, who was grinning.

“That’s the age most elves are still acting like children,” Cordellia muttered. “I have… cousins, you would call them, who used to wear me out, always wanting to play games I had no desire to be part of. Alas I didn’t always have an option to not take part in them.”

“And here I was thinking how great it would be to have that kind of affection,” Tanila said. “Touch was limited after a certain age, and anything that came from that point on was rarely something I desired.”

Max shifted slightly, feeling uncomfortable about the difference between his life growing up and the lives of the two women sharing theirs.

I… I guess I never considered how different all the races really are, even after what I witnessed between the different ones on the other planet. Some were affectionate, others not. Here is the same way.

You are different because of how you were raised. While we could discuss the concept of nature versus nurture, I believe, Max, that you are a product of the love you got at home. When I searched your memories, most of them

were filled with a mother who tucked you in every night and told you she loved you. Your father worked beside you, teaching and talking, and rarely did he ever yell at you or have to resort to physical punishment.

Even your sister and you have a relationship I think some might describe as rare. Had you grown up in an environment like Tanila has described… you might have easily given in to the hunger early on.

Do you still believe that everything is chance? That I was given you by chance? All the small things that seem impossible to work out… part of me just can't help but wonder what would have happened if Caleb had gotten you.

Bob chuckled, and Max knew exactly what his skill thought about that.

He would have killed you… he would have killed everyone he could if given the chance. Of that I have no doubt.

"You there?"

Tanila's poke caused him to cut off the conversation he was having and nod.

"Sorry, lost in my thoughts on how I want to treat my wife and children. I don't want there to ever be a day when you or they aren't 100% certain that I love them."

"Children? As in multiple?" Tanila asked, cocking her head slightly and grinning.

"Dozens!" Max proclaimed, causing Cordellia to start laughing.

"Um… perhaps two or three at most," their mage got out as she shook her head. "I'm not sure I could do dozens."

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As the carriage moved down the road, the walls of Nomgrom began to disappear from sight, Max sat there watching his friend as he stared out the window.

Fowl was rubbing Batrire's hand and had a small but noticeable smile on his face.

"You okay?"

His dwarven friend nodded.

"Yeah… just grateful for this… for you… for everyone in here. It's like a dream, and even though I feel like this next part might not go as well as I had hoped, having had those two days with my brothers and sister meant more than I could describe. Getting to laugh with them, eat with them, hear the stories of what has been taking place was a comfort to my soul."

"It appears they missed you as much as you missed them."

The hardened warrior bobbed his head, looking over at Batrire, who was breathing quietly. She was asleep from a long night of drinking and late conversations that had worn her out.

"Family… you of all people know the importance of it, Max, and that is why I tell everyone you are my half-brother. It sounds foolish or more of a joke in your world, but to a dwarf, that means something far greater than you might realize."

“Like what?”

Brown eyes focused on Max as the dwarf chewed on his beard.

“When I marry Batrire, she will become my wife, and her family will become my family. Her entire family, which you only got to meet for a brief moment, will now be as close as blood. If they needed someone to defend them, I would be obligated and happy to do so. Just like blood. Even though they are my half-family, they are still family. Does that make sense?”

“It does,” he replied. “Similar to what we call in-laws, but I think for you much stronger. I’ve told you before as well that I always wanted a brother, especially one that looks up to me.”

Both men chuckled quietly, trying not to wake up the three women who were asleep, all them enjoying the gentle movement of the carriage and the rest from the busy days before.

“Thank you also for when you came up to defend me from my brother back there,” Fowl said after a moment of silence.

“Of course. You’re family.”

“No… it’s more than that. Heldon was a fool… his actions were wrong but also right. Since I was cut off from the family, my being home and the news that was spreading created conflict for them as a whole. My being who I am and their lack of acknowledgment of me puts them in a bad light. He had to come and challenge me. To not do so either means he didn’t honor my mom and dad’s command or that they were okay with me being a liar and causing my family to lose face.”

“Similar to Jataic doing what he did at the alehouse?”

Fowl shook his head and frowned.

“No… her dad was just being a fool.”

Rubbing his head softly, Max tried to mentally note how confusing dwarven family and societal rules might be.

“Uh… how so?”

“He was just a pissed-off father. Batrire left on her own, had the skill given for such an adventure, and I had the skills that complemented hers. No one could blame the pair of us for leaving except him. Did I make matters worse by how quickly I left? Sure… but then again, I was being forced from my home by my parents. With nowhere to live and only a small amount of money I had been storing and saving since the day I knew what I wanted to be, there wasn’t time for me to sit around.”

“And you couldn’t stay in Nomgrom because of all the drama they were causing?”

“Correct,” Fowl stated. “I could have tried, but that wouldn’t have been good in the long term. Every day I was in town made it harder on my brothers and sisters, forced to choose between seeing me in secret or even acknowledging me in public. I… I saw my mother a day after I was kicked out as I walked down a street toward Batrire’s parents’ place. She was on the same side as me, and the moment her eyes met

mine, she crossed over and moved to the other sidewalk, not looking at me again. It was that moment I knew I had to go."

Frowning, Max felt the pain of what his friend was sharing. He could understand just part of it, having had to leave his home suddenly and knowing how hard it had been on his family.

"What Heldon did was required, and what you did… that is what a half-brother does."

"I'm just glad you were able to convince him to not hurt himself. Had he broken his hand like Jataic had on you… I might have laughed."

Fowl chuckled softly and nodded, a slight grin appearing behind his beard.

"He thanked me later for stopping him, especially after word reached him about how that had gone for Jataic. Even Motak mentioned how grateful they were that you didn't take offense or do anything that was within your right as my half-brother."

"Do you think you could write up a list of what I'm allowed to do or not do?" Max asked. "Or is there a book on dwarven etiquette I can read?"

"Bah, you'll have to ask Batrire. She'll know more about books than me. I still make mistakes and pray to Ockrim that I don't do something stupid when we are in Nalgrun. A lifetime as a dwarf doesn't mean I know everything."

"That's because you don't pay attention like you should," Batrire muttered, her eyes still closed as her head shifted on his shoulder. "Still, you're learning. Even if you deny it, I know you must have put a few points into intelligence."

Fowl chuckled and squeezed her hand, turning his head till he could kiss hers.

"We'll we're hosed then," Max stated, flashing a grin at his friend. "A dwarf that doesn't have any ideas on social etiquette in his own capital and a human who has managed to piss off a good chunk of the elven population as well as the nobility. We're the perfect pair for getting in all sorts of trouble."

A groan came from their healer as she opened a single eye and glared at him.

"I swear… I'd threaten to shave you bald, but that's an empty one at best. You two better let me do most of the talking, or we'll end up in more trouble than I want to think about."

Fowl shook his head.

"Please… what are they going to do to us? Who can stand against the power of my beard and his bald head?"

Batrire sat up and frowned. Two seconds later, she sucker-punched Fowl in the arm.

"Don't be stupid. You and I both know the King's Guard has just as much power as you and I. While I doubt that they could take Max, it would make our life and our family life very difficult if you act like a donkey."

"The King's Guard. You mentioned before that Fowl could join them because of his skills."

Batrire nodded slowly, taking her icy glare off their warrior and sharing it momentarily with Max.

“Yes… and if word gets out that he has those skills, it will make for an interesting time in the capital. Some might be excited about such an opportunity, but if we want to continue in the tower, we’ll have to be smart. Pissing off what many consider the strongest group in the entire three kingdoms isn’t a good move.”

Max frowned and shook his head.

“I thought the Faction teams were the strongest group. I mean, aren’t they?”

“No… she’s right,” Tanila said as she shifted on the seat and sat up. “Even my father knows the rumors and stories of that group. When a dwarf has the power and strength to be part of it and pass a secret test, they leave any Faction they are part of and join.”

“So if he was forced to join?” Max asked.

“I’d have to leave you all,” Fowl replied.

57 Chapter 386 - Checking In

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Chapter 386 - Checking In

The three days it took to get to the capital were spent in fun conversations as well as games.

Max quickly learned that Tanila could defeat most of them in strategy games unless Bob helped him cheat.

Cordellia was talented at using her imagination and creating stories to entertain, while Fowl simply passed gas that could almost kill someone.

As Nalgrun began to come into view, Max got his first real look at the famed dwarven capital.

Giant mountains that seemed to rise up into the clouds appeared on the second day of their trip, and as they were only a few hours out now, his mind struggled to comprehend what he had been told about but now saw.

Carved into the stone was a city that rose up the giant earth formation.

Buildings and roads had been cut into the mountain, creating places for people to live, and a whole underground area had also been built into it. The outer edges of the capital started at the mountain’s base, where a waterfall far to the east had been diverted to water the land at its feet.

Large fields of grains, fruit trees, animals, and more seemed to be set in perfect patterns and well-maintained. Even with the changing of the seasons, there were dwarves everywhere, working and taking care of them.

“How many of you are there?”

Batrire chuckled at Cordellia’s question.

“I don’t have an exact answer, but if you counted every dwarf that lived outside and inside the mountain, we could easily be one hundred thousand.”

“In one place?!”

“You say that like it’s a large number, dear. You and I know that the Mylho Alora has a large elven population. Easily over fifty thousand.”

“Not in such a small area,” their ranger argued. “We’re spread out, easily twenty miles of land and forest to count that may.”

Max sat there listening to the two women argue about how many of each race was living inside the capitals, yet all he could care about was the city he watched get closer.

Can you imagine carving this place? Surely they used a skill like mine? I mean… did Ockrim really help with this?

A thread of consideration came from Bob, and as Max moved his head, trying to scan the area around them, a reply finally came.

I don’t know. So much is still hidden, and yet I feel like I should be able to recall it. Each time I evolve, the previous obstruction that hides things from my memory is gone, and yet another appears.

The fact that some skills have faded out of use or existence after time, like your ability to craft and use those guns, proves that this world had them at one time. Perhaps if I was given time to explore without fear of being found and attacked, I could try to find out more about all this.

Like time with a skill shard? Maybe the one at the Faction house?

That might not be a bad idea, but I’m not certain. The one that Riniya had was different yet similar. It didn’t come from your world.

A shudder ran through Max, and he felt Tanila turn her head from the conversation taking place and look at him.

“You okay?”

He nodded.

“Just considering how these were made.”

“I already told you how,” Fowl muttered. “Ockrim himself came and helped carve our very home upon the creation of our world. He knew we needed a place deep in the mountains.”

Forcing himself to look away from the capital, Max frowned and nodded.

“Just tell me, do you really believe it was him using a pickaxe, a hammer, and chisel or some other tools versus a skill? We both know how impossible something like this would be to make by hand.”

“Not for a god it wouldn’t,” their warrior scoffed. “I mean you already mentioned the power you felt coming off him. Why would this be a problem at all?”

“It’s the skills…” Tanila said slowly. “You’re thinking about the skills that might have been used to create this.”

Bobbing his head, Max held up two fingers.

“The elves live in a place with trees and buildings that are one. You showed me pictures and told me how even your father has a gigantic tree in the castle with rooms that wind through the trunk. To do that requires magic, powerful magic, and I’m not even sure I could do that.”

Tapping the second finger momentarily, he motioned out the window with his head.

“Nalgrun is a city carved inside a mountain, and from what I can see at this distance, the amount of labor isn’t the only problem. Just dealing with the materials that would be left over would be… a small mountain. Yet if one had the ability to simply shift and meld the stone, or turn it into nothing but air, again, not something I can do, then that would allow for a simpler explanation.”

He held out his hand, and the gun he owned appeared in his hand.

“Someone had at one point a skill to craft these. That knowledge is gone. Which makes me wonder what other skills are missing or lost?”

“This all goes back to what you picked up in the other world?” Cordellia asked. “You’re still trying to figure out the system.”

Max nodded as their archer gave him a weird look.

“Yes, but not for what might seem like obvious reasons. Everything we have faced and will face revolves around the tower. My hope is that we can fight in the tower here—”

“But they don’t let anyone but dwarves fight past the 50th floor,” Fowl interrupted. “Surely you don’t expect them to allow us to do so.”

“Are you planning to tell them we’re fighting on those tower floors? Will they come in with us and make sure that we aren’t fighting on the ones we’re not supposed to?”

Their warrior frowned and then started to chuckle.

“I doubt they would do such a thing. Still… it almost seems like we’re breaking the rules. So count me in!”

A groan came from Batrire, who was shaking her head at her man.

“We’re not even in the capital walls yet, and you’re already preparing on getting us in trouble.”

“Bah, wait till he sees the tower!” Fowl exclaimed, obviously ignoring their healer’s statement. “It’s way better than the one in Peltagow!”

“Yet our tower is even nicer,” Cordellia stated. “The gardens and trees that surround it are unlike anything else.”

“Uh… you mean they’re not like normal trees?’

Their ranger gave Fowl the middle finger as he started to chuckle.

“You two stop acting like children,” Tanila muttered as she motioned out the window and where Max’s gaze was currently focused. “We’re going to be at the main gate and walls.”

Goosebumps rose up on Max’s skin, and it was hard for him not to show his excitement. Even after having been in a different world, the fact that he was getting to visit Nalgrun was an experience he had never imagined.

Why… I mean I know why because I can read your mind, but why is this so important to you? It’s just a regular city… In comparison to what we saw in Quan Ma, how can this one even compare?

And since you can read my mind and what I’m about to say, you know this is special. I’ve seen drawings and heard stories about this place. We both know I was a… pansy and had no intentions of ever leaving Alundra. So, getting to see this with my own eyes is like reliving one of the stories I heard as a child.

The ones that made you afraid of being an adventurer.

He could sense the sarcasm oozing from what Bob had said through their bond.

Yes… I mean, aren’t there things you want to see or explore?

A silence seemed to stretch on far too long, and Max almost apologized.

I… I do not know how to answer that question. Sometimes, I think I might remember or recall something, and then it is gone, like a gust of wind moving the curtains for just a moment. Part of me has been frustrated at how I feel something is missing. Something very critical and important.

To be able to be free and find out what it is… I guess that is what I want to learn more than anything.

I’ll do what I can to make that possible. You know that.

Yes, and I am grateful for that.

A finger poked him a second time, and Max turned to see Tanila with her head cocked slightly.

“Lost in another conversation?”

“Yeah, but nothing bad. Simply being made fun of for wanting to live out a childhood dream.”

“Bah… you want a dream worth having?” Fowl asked. “Let me take you to a place for our bachelor party!”

“Fowl Hammerfall, you’ll do no such thing unless you want to find yourself alone on our wedding day!” Batrire exclaimed.

“I jest,” their warrior replied, winking at Max when she wasn’t looking.

“Trust me, I don’t want your fiancée mad at me and neither do you. What if she’s a little too slow on a heal? Then she would get all your money and loot, and they would just call it an accident.”

All the women started to laugh, and Fowl began to frown.

“You wouldn’t.”

“Is that a question or a statement?” Batrire asked, most of her teeth showing as she sported a massive grin.

“Bah, dear Ockrim, what did I get myself into!” Fowl exclaimed as he held his hands upward and looked toward the sky.

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“We’re still going to need your names and information. Don’t blame me; it’s by order of the king.”

“When did this start?” Batrire asked as she put her thumb on a metal tablet and waited for it to show up her information.

“About two weeks ago,” the guard stated as she scanned the information and then coughed. “Your level… it’s over sixty.”

The other two guards, who were waiting on the results for Cordellia and Tanila, both went wide-eyed as their tablets gave the same results.

“Dear Ockrim, they’re the same!”

Max and Fowl moved up, and held out their thumbs.

“You, by chance, wouldn’t mind sharing yer stats, would you?”

The sound of metal on metal came as one of the male dwarves smacked the guard who had just asked that question in the helmet.

“Bah, don’t do that! You know how bad that is!”

“But…”

Max almost chuckled as the one who had smacked the other raised his hands again.

“Don’t make me tell the captain.”

“Forgive him,” the guard who had been helping Batrire said. “He’s new, and you five are apparently going to be his first party, so we can’t see your information besides name and level.”

“There’s a reason for that,” Batrire stated as she moved back and let her man go next. “No one in the tower likes to share that information.”

“Yer tower climbers?!”

Once again, the sound of being struck in the back of the head rang out.

“Conazul, go tell the captain I sent you. If yer smart, you’ll tell him why before I do.”

“But—”

The older male guard held up a hand and pointed toward a building near the gate on the outside of the wall.

“Imagine being that naive,” Fowl declared as he winked at the woman when she saw his level.

Batrire shook her head and gave him a dirty look.

“Take these and make sure to wear them anytime you go inside the mountain or want to use these gates,” the older dwarf said as he held out five bracelets, each a royal red color. “I’m sure with your sharp eyes, you might have noticed the different colored ones on some of the others.”

Fowl spun and grunted as he finally appeared to notice what all the others had.

“With these, you’ll have access to the inner city and be left alone. I expect you all are aware that any potential problems caused by anyone in your party would lead to a guard or two coming to investigate. Upon seeing your red bracelet, they would give you more leeway than the others who are not as strong or just average citizens.

“You five would find a member or two of the King’s Guard coming to speak with you. Do I need to explain how bad it would be if you decided not to follow their orders?”

They shook their heads as they slipped the bands on, watching the metal bracelet shrink to fit almost like a second skin over their armor, clothes or bare skin.

“That makes this next part easier,” the guard said with a slight frown as he looked at Max and the two elves. “Our rules of fighting are different than many others as I’m certain your dwarven friends can tell you. Intent is everything. Dwarves fight because that is just a part of us, but most will never attack with the true intention of killing or maiming. Often it is all about honor or a perceived injustice. If a dwarf does attack you and they do not turn red, be very certain that if you respond in kind that your intentions are only to protect one’s honor.”

“That’s why Jataic didn’t turn red!” Cordellia exclaimed.

“Yes dear,” Batrire informed her. “When he struck Fowl, it was a perceived injustice of taking me away from my family. At no point did he want to kill or maim Fowl. He simply wanted to show his pain from what had happened.”

“And that’s why when Fowl tossed him into the hay it wasn’t an attack either.”

Max started to grin as their ranger put together some of the things he had figured out after that first exchange.

“That is why I moved behind Heldon and was willing to take the blow. He didn’t want to kill Fowl or me, simply to defend his family’s honor.”

Both dwarven guards nodded, and a smile was present for a moment.

“It would appear your friend has taught you well. I’m impressed to find a human who seems to understand our culture so well.”

“Please… don’t compliment him,” Fowl said. “We have a hard enough time getting his head into the carriage as it is.”

Clearing his throat, the older dwarf nodded and held up two stubby fingers.

“Remember, if you want to use the tower, like every other capital, you’ll have to check in with the guards outside it. They will go over its rules with you. Lastly, remember to take care of what you say when children are present. I would prefer to not hear that any of you had to have the King’s Guard called to hold you down while some mother washed your mouth out.”

Fowl started smacking his lips and grimaced.

“Gods, I’ve forgotten how much of a—” He paused and glanced around in each direction for a second. “Pain in a hairy dwarf’s arse this place can be.”

A growl came from Batrire, who held out her hand, and a bar of soap appeared.

Both guards chuckled, and the older one shook his head.

“Well, it appears you are ready. Enjoy Nalgrun, and may our city be a blessing to you.”

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Chapter 387 - Meeting a New Leader

“We’ve been expecting you,” Erwini declared as she greeted the five of them. “Everett sent a message and told me to be prepared. Beyond that, he just laughed.”

Fowl and Batrire started to chuckle while Max moved to shake the red-headed dwarven leader of the Golden Axe faction in Nalgrun.

“We’ll try to behave for you. Still, we appreciate you giving us a place to stay while we’re in town.”

“Bah,” she said with a huff. “Your team has everyone in the Faction talking, and the truth is our members here are champing at the bit to meet you and hopefully train with you. Now take a seat, and let’s chat. I’ve got some questions, and no doubt you five have some as well.”

Following the dwarven woman, Max had already been surprised at how minimal her office was even compared to Everett’s. A simple stone desk was in the same place, and a trio of couches around a small table with a pair of chairs were waiting for them at the end of the room. A few bookshelves and some decorations lined the stone walls, but beyond that, no real treasures or art were hanging.

“I can see you’re thinking something,” Erwini said as she waited by the couch. “Is something wrong with my office?”

“No… it’s just… simple?”

“What he means,” Batrire interjected, “is that compared to Everett’s, you don’t have anything on your walls.”

A grin appeared, and the dwarf gently tugged on both of her red braids, smoothing out her beard.

“That’s because I don’t want people to know what I have. Occasionally if I feel the need, I may display a few things to help a *guest* know what I’ve accomplished, but from what I know about you, they wouldn’t be anything in comparison.”

“Such as?” Fowl asked as he plopped down on the red cushioned couch, letting out a soft moan as he sank into it. “Gods, this thing is amazing!”

“Only the best,” the Faction leader stated as she procured some cups and a bottle of alcohol from her storage. “Now sit, and let me start if you don’t mind.”

“All business,” Tanila whispered to Max as she snuggled next to him on one of the couches. “But Fowl is right. This thing is comfortable.”

Erwini began handing out the glass cups, each containing only a finger of the caramel-colored liquid, and after everyone had theirs, she raised hers.

“May our axes never become dull.”

Everyone nodded and raised theirs, draining the cups in a single gulp.

“Ohh… that’s the good stuff,” their warrior declared as he sat the cup on the wooden table. “How I’ve missed the taste of home.”

“Bah, like you ever enjoyed the good stuff when we lived here,” Batrire argued. “You could barely afford the alcohol my father served, let alone this.”

A few chuckles came, and after sitting in her chair, Erwini took a moment to study them all.

“You’re here for a wedding, and I believe you’re trying to climb the tower?”

“We are,” their healer replied. “His parents are somewhere in the capital. It appears they won a crafting contest early this year, and the king brought them here to craft. Any ideas where they might be?”

Max noticed only the slightest twitch of her cheek as the Faction leader nodded slowly.

“I have heard of three families that have been brought to his personal crafting forge inside the castle. If they are like the rest, they will be living there now and have a personal residence and a team under them. To hear that they are one of those… makes me wonder what else I’m missing.”

“Lots,” Cordellia muttered as she twisted the glass in her hand. “We still need to find out who we need to talk to about climbing the tower.”

“That won’t be a problem. I can have a representative here to conduct an interview. Your armbands will make things easier, and the biggest problem right now is the increased security inside the capital. No one knows why it is like this, but we don’t argue. As you two know, the king’s word is law.”

Both dwarves nodded, and Max saw them looking at him. Fowl’s eyebrows scrunched together, and he gave a slight head signal.

“The tower… If we wanted to climb past the 50th floor. How hard would that be to happen?”

“Legally? To use a kind way of saying it… you’re screwed.”

Their warrior snorted.

“And an unkind way?” he asked.

Erwini smirked at Fowl.

“You know I’m not one to use that kind of language often, but you’d have about as much luck as pleasing a full-grown dragon with what you’re probably packing.”

Cordellia snorted and began coughing, while Tanila started turning almost the same red shade as Fowl.

“She’s right, dear,” Batrire said, giving him a gentle elbow. “Now stop trying to be ugly and let the woman talk.”

Huffing, Fowl crossed his arms and frowned.

Grinning like a cat who caught a mouse, Erwini tapped her stubby fingers together.

“You can try to break the rules. Some have done it in the past. I don’t know how, but supposedly, the king can sense when someone does. Or perhaps it’s just luck? No one knows, but those caught haven’t ever enjoyed the punishment.”

“Can we get permission?”

The faction leader turned to Max, who hadn’t reacted at all to the last bit of conversation.

She shook her head slowly and then, after a moment, stopped and shrugged.

“It’s technically possible to ask, but you’ll not want to do that with the one they send. You’ll need to meet with an advisor of the king, and after that you can potentially take your request to him. Of course Fowl or Batrire will need to be the one to make the request, as you’re not a citizen here.”

“She means a dwarf,” Fowl stated.

“I know,” Max replied, never taking his eyes off the green pair the Faction leader was watching him with. “But she’s hiding something. I’m guessing she doesn’t have to bluff as often as Everett did.”

Snorting, Erwini just smiled.

“You’re as good as he warned me,” she muttered. “The truth is, you can break the rules if what I hear about you is true, but the problem is the consequences. Unless you want to get into a fight with the King’s Guard, you wouldn’t risk such a thing. But if the rumors are true and you’re as strong as they say you are… perhaps they might not force the issue.”

“Bah, you’re saying he could take the King’s Guard?”

Erwini bobbed her head one time at Fowl’s question.

“Impossible,” Batrire said. “The stories—”

“Aren’t anything from what I’ve learned and what little Everett would share. The fact that he didn’t share more and that the council wouldn’t give up any real details tells me that Max… that is the name you’re going by, right?”

“It is.”

“Then, Max is far stronger than I’ve been told. For someone to solo clear a tower floor is one thing. To do it in under an hour… well… that’s a mighty feat. To do four tower floors in just a few…”

“It was more than a few,” Max replied. “But I can see where this is going. What do you want to ask?”

Holding up a hand, she waved it as if to surrender.

“I’m not looking for what your stats are or the skills you possess. I want to know more about how long you will stay.”

“For the materials?”

She grinned and nodded.

“And that’s the mind I was warned about,” she replied. “Everett told me that you have brought a lot of growth to the Faction house. Even the council has sung your praises. I’ve been permitted to open up some items from the crafting vault if you’re willing to stay and help us grow for a bit.”

“What kind of growth are you wanting?” Tanila asked, shifting in her seat and leaning forward slightly.

“The crystals that drop. We could use some to help our members with their skills. I’d assume you could most likely farm the purple ones. I would gladly share what we have with you if you were willing.”

Max felt everyone looking at him, and he studied their faces one at a time.

“We talked about farming and resetting.”

“Resetting? As in all your tower experience?! You haven’t done that yet?!”

Erwini’s outburst seemed a bit out of place as her chair scooted backward a few inches.
“Not yet, but we had discussed it. The time just hadn’t ever been there.”

“I… you’re…”

Blinking rapidly, the Faction leader tried to look at all of them, her mouth moving and words not coming out.

“Yes, we’re strong,” Fowl answered. “No we won’t tell you, but we’re going to beat the tower as a team. You can count on it.”

Clamping her mouth shut, Erwini leaned back in her chair and silently sat there for a moment.

“Beating it? He was serious.”

“Everett?” Max asked.

Bobbing her head, the Faction leader slowly tugged on her red beard braids.

“Does that seem like something you didn’t expect would happen?”

“No one expects it to happen,” she replied. “I mean… You’re Seth Pendal, the great warrior of Peltagow who has done the impossible, and yet most still don’t believe you’ll truly attempt the tower. To do so is… suicide.”

“Because it hasn’t been done in so long, or because no one will talk about how it works?” Tanila asked.

“Because everyone who attempts it dies!”

Her outburst echoed off the stone walls, and the carpeted floor area did little to dampen the noise.

“Forgive me,” she muttered, pulling out the bottle of alcohol again. “That was uncalled for.”

“No, you’re fine,” Max replied. “You asked, and we answered. As you can tell, we are prepared for what is coming next. I don’t want to get in trouble, and if fighting past the 50th floor isn’t allowed, we won’t go against the king or his proclamation, as I don’t want my two friends to be banished from their own home. Instead, we’ll farm the tower and do what we can to maximize our tower experience. But, since you did ask…”

As he spoke, Max began summoning different crystals from the tower, setting down a yellow, green, red, orange, and purple one on the stone table.

“I have a few that I can give you right now, and I would love to see the crafting materials you are allowed to share.”

Erwini’s hand trembled, and more liquid than before fell into the glass, a little spilling onto the table before she caught herself, eyes fixated on the crystals.

“You… have those? Does Everett know?”

“He does, and there are more that I could possibly trade as well,” he replied, holding two more purple crystals in his hands.

The slightest groan escaped the Faction leader’s lips, and Fowl laughed.

“You best be careful, Max or you’ll break her like you did Everett.”

Scowling, the dwarf shook her head and drank the entire cup, ignoring that there was over twice as much as before.

“I’m going to have nothing to craft with or trade, but now I understand why Everett told me to make that offer. Do you want to put those away or leave them for me?”

“You can have these,” Max said as he put the other two purple crystals on the table by the others. “I think right now we’d rather just get to our rooms, unwind, and then start the process of finding Fowl’s parents.”

Clearing her throat, Erwini nodded and stood, holding out five keys.

“I’ll show you to your room. It’s actually a suite, similar to one Everett said you had for a while at his place. Hopefully, you five will be okay with that.”

“Oh, we like spending time with each other,” Batrire said as she stood. “Unlike my real family, I like these people.”

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The five of them sat on the furniture, each enjoying being able to lounge around in comfortable clothes without having to dress up.

“You know, I think she would do anything Max asked,” Cordellia teased. “The way she eyed him after he showed off his crystals…”

“His crystals.” Fowl giggled slightly. “And I’m blamed for bad word choices.”

Clearing her throat, Tanila frowned at the pair, ignoring Max’s smile.

“We need to be careful, even more so,” their mage stated. “Word will spread, and once it does, I’m certain it will make us a target somehow.”

“How so?” Batrire asked. “You know there are no elf-only Factions in Nalgrun. What are the odds we’ll run into any fanatics here?”

“She’s not talking about them,” Max replied. “Tanila’s thinking about how we’re going to be perceived and the potential problem once people discover who we are and the wedding that is supposed to take place.”

“Oh… well, dwarves aren’t like that,” their healer stated. “We have a few who will try to butter you up and earn points, but most won’t get involved with the day-to-day going of that.”

“But how many might try to show up to a wedding of a dwarf couple that are both past the 50th floor of the tower?”

Wincing, Batrire understood what Tanila had just asked.

“Yeah… that might be a problem… how much gold do we still have?”

Fowl sat up and looked at Max, a bit of drool almost coming from his mouth.

“Enough,” he replied. “I mean… how much do you need for this wedding?”

Clearing her throat, their healer shrugged and grinned as she played with her beard.

“An unlimited budget… hmmm, what kind of princess wedding could I have?”

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59 Chapter 388 - The Cost to Climb https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2125814/chapter-388-the-cost-to-climb;[2025-03-14 14:02]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

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Chapter 388 - The Cost to Climb

Max stood at one of the ledges that overlooked the city inside the mountain.

“It’s amazing,” he stated as Tanila stood beside him, nodding.

“Makes you wish you were a dwarf, doesn’t it?”

“No, then I’d be shorter,” Max replied, elbowing his friend. “Still, this is beyond what I had expected.”

Before them was a vast open area, all lit up like the sun, with a clouded section hidden and not in the center of the five-mile-wide area.

“That’s where the tower is,” Batrire said as she pointed to the section that seemed to shimmer in the middle of everything. “It runs up into the mountain and out the top of it.”

Nodding, Max remembered the crude drawing that had done this view no justice. He had seen it as a kid in school, but here he was, standing on one of the twenty floors that were carved around this open section.

Below were buildings, each one also cut from the mountain’s stone and no more than three or four stories tall. This created a puzzle-like view of buildings that stretched out around them.

Like a giant circle, there were stairs and ramps all over the sides, leading to the different floors and sections of the capital.

Near the center where the tower was, a large castle could be seen.

“How do they get the stone to be different colors if it’s all the same rock?” Cordellia asked. “And don’t say it’s magic.”

“Well, it is,” Batrire replied. “Part of it’s magic, and the other part is a special paint, made with magic. When applied, it fuses with the rock, soaking in and becoming one with it. Most houses and buildings below don’t need a new coat for two or three hundred years.”

“And those trees,” Tanila said as she motioned at a few gardens that could be seen around the area they were in. “They seem alive, even though they grow inside a mountain.”

“What can I say? Ockrim loves us,” Fowl answered.

Max ignored the banter and chit-chat. Instead, his mind memorized everything he saw.

This is a very well-planned city. There are twenty floors, and yes, those are the ducts that house the movement of air to keep things fresh and not stale.

And those other ones must be for waste. It makes Peltagow look like... like my hometown compared to the capital. You can feel the very magic within the stone as I can.

There is something inside it. I believe you are right. Whatever Ockrim did when he created this has some mark of his power. Part of it feels like that coin he gave you.

You mentioned how gods create worlds... how they draw power from what they create. I guess this is a small glimpse of the power they possess. We couldn’t even do something like this.

“Max?”

Tanila’s voice saying his name caused him to turn and see her smiling and studying him.

“You ready?”

“I was born ready!”

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They got a lot of looks from different dwarves and the occasional humans and rare elves as they walked along the sidewalks, each of them snacking from various foods that were being sold on their path to the castle.

Munching on a kabob with goat meat covered in a creamy sauce, Max laughed as some dripped down his chin.

“You need a beard,” Fowl stated as he pointed at his with a greasy finger. “Catches the drippings so you don’t get your outfit dirty!”

Nodding, he stored the piece of food and procured a napkin, wiping off his face before it did just that.

Cordellia muttered, a bright yellow stain on her green shirt.

“Is this why you dwarves have these beards?” their ranger asked. “Because everything we’ve eaten so far seems to threaten to get one dirty with every bite.”

Licking her fingers, Batrire nodded.

“If it ain’t juicy, you shouldn’t put it in your mouth.”

Fowl started to choke, and the three women groaned as Max started to look everywhere but their warrior.

“God, you’re so dirty-minded!’

“You did say it,” Tanila reminded their healer. “Still, I don’t think I’ve ever had to be so careful when eating.”

“But it’s all good!” Fowl declared, having cleared whatever piece had choked him up. “Best of all, you can store these and enjoy them later!”

“How about we grab a drink before we finish this last bit,” Max said as he pointed up ahead where a pair of dwarves were selling flasks of ale outside a shop. “I don’t know about you all, but I need something wet.”

Tanila elbowed him as their warrior started choking again.

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“Do you have an appointment?”

Sighing, Fowl shook his head.

“For the second time, we do not, but my parents are working for the king! Why do I need an appointment to see my own family?”

The trio of guards outside the southern gate they had arrived at each gave them the same look of *who the heck cares* as their warrior pleaded his case.

“As you’ve been told already, red band or not, you need an appointment to enter the castle and get access to the crafting areas. If you’ll fill out these forms, we can notify you when that moment arrives.”

Max couldn’t help but admire the three guards, each in a dull brown set of chain armor. Although no weapons were present, they were able to stop the advance of a group of tower climbers with a clipboard of paperwork.

“But—”

“We’ll fill out the forms,” Batrire said, cutting off her man. “How long does it typically take to receive an appointment?”

The bald-headed guard, who had been busting Fowl’s chops, turned and shrugged at their healer.

“Week? Maybe two?”

“Two weeks?! But we’re supposed to get married!” Fowl exclaimed. “How can I—”

As his friends and the guards argued, Max saw a pair of dwarves in full plate armor who had appeared about a minute ago, standing inside the gate watching them. Each was slightly taller than the usual dwarf, and Max would almost swear he could feel their gaze.

You can sense that can’t you?

Their aura? It’s impressive to feel it from this far. How strong are they?

Obviously, they are in the tower, probably close to the rest of your party, if not stronger. The real question I guess I have is why we can sense their aura. Something feels… different?

You mean, why they have one and we don’t?

Yes. Riniya had one. Igarra had one. No one else we have met seems to have one except the common factor being they had to have completed the tower or perhaps part of it.

So in time, if we continue going through the tower, then we—

Max stopped his train of thought as the aura both dwarves had been giving off vanished. A third dwarf appeared, this one a woman based on her plate armor and the way it hugged her versus the other two. Long black hair was tied in braids, and dark eyes were fixated on him alone.

She is stronger than them… even if she doesn’t have that presence.

It would appear they can turn it off at a moment’s notice.

“Max, we need to go!”

He had sensed his friends starting to turn and leave, but Fowl’s outburst made him look at his friend.

“Four pages! I have to fill out four pages to see my parents!”

“We’ll be fine,” Max said as he came up next to his friend and retrieved the papers that were getting crumpled. “In the meantime, we can deal with doing the tower, hitting different alehouses and drinking till you pass out, or starting the process of preparing for a wedding. Obviously, I know which of the three I’d vote for, especially since we came here specifically for one of them.”

Huffing, Fowl nodded and slowly began to take deep breaths, letting them in and then out.

“Sorry… I just… after the time with my brothers and sister, all I can think about is finally getting to see my parents and prove to them that what I chose was the right path.”

His shoulders slumped slightly, and Max nodded at the others who had stopped. Putting a hand on his friend’s head, Max gave it a gentle shake.

“No matter what happens, you’re chosen by Ockrim himself,” he informed his friend. “No other dwarf, just you, Fowl Hammerfall. Right now, you’re stronger than most dwarves in this city, and soon, I have no doubt, will be the strongest when all this is said and done.”

Turning his friend slowly, Max looked into his friend’s brown eyes, noticing that they trembled slightly.

“Each of us has hard moments, and you’ve been there for us. None of us will leave you, and we need the warrior that stood there, taking all that damage while a boss killed itself as your skill sent back a portion of the pain you suffered.”

Fowl began to smile and looked up from the stone path they were standing on.

“Now, stop pouting. Go put your arm around that beautiful dwarven healer, and let’s go back to the Faction house.”

Clearing his throat, their warrior nodded and held out his hand, grabbing Max and pulling him into a quick embrace.

“And that’s why you’re going to be my best dwarf at the wedding,” Fowl whispered as they stood there a moment.

“What?!”

Chuckling, Fowl just grinned.

“I was supposed to ask, but I figured why bother? We both know you’ll do fine.”

“I… I’m honored. Really.”

“When you two are done tickling each other’s souls, can we go get a carriage? All this eating has made me tired!” Batrire shouted.

Laughing, Max hefted his friend off the ground and threw him over his shoulder, jogging to where the women were waiting.

“Put me down or I’ll take back what I asked!” howled Fowl.

“You didn’t ask!” Max replied, laughing the entire way.

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“Hmmm… it appears everything is in order,” declared the tower attendant who sat in their room. “You five will be permitted to access any of the floors one through forty-nine, but you are not allowed to go beyond that, do you understand?”

Each of them nodded, watching as the dwarf without a single hair on his wrinkled, bald head studied them over his rimmed glasses.

“Good, now then, as far as payment, it will be a gold per person for each day spent in the tower. Payment is due upon exiting the tower.”

“And how many floors can we attempt in a day?” Max asked.

Scoffing, the older man’s white eyebrows became one as he frowned. His white beard was getting thin, and those wrinkled lips were pushed so hard together that they made mountains of flesh from force.

“You think you can clear multiple floors in a day?”

“I mean, what if a floor wasn’t worth the time or effort, say a maze or puzzle one and we left, choosing instead to go to a different one?”

Letting his face relax slightly, Bidforo bobbed his head.

“That does make more sense. Still it’s one gold per day. Try as many as you like in that time frame. “Any other questions?”

Everyone glanced at each other and shook their heads.

“Well then, I’ll be leaving you all to it,” the older dwarf stated, rising slowly from the chair he had been sitting in.

“Don’t forget to take that bottle with you,” Fowl said quickly, picking up and handing the alcohol Erwini had given them to *gift* to Bidforo.

A slight twinkle appeared in the gray eyes, and a tight grin was present only for the second time, the first of which appeared when they poured him a glass.

“You do realize I can’t be bribed?”

“Oh, on Ockrim’s name, it’s not a bribe,” Fowl protested. “Simply trying to make sure my armor doesn’t get too tight, and I know it would be better to remove all temptation.”

“Very well. I appreciate your gift lest it be tossed away,” Bidforo stated. “Now then, Erwini, if you don’t mind, I want to head back home. For some reason, they wanted me to be the one here today.”

“It’s probably because everyone knows you’re not one to trifle with,” the Faction leader stated as she led the older dwarf to the door.

After it closed behind the pair, Max smiled and looked at the party.

“So… who wants to see if we can’t clear a floor or two before dinner?”

Cordellia laughed and shook her head.

“We’re really going to do this, aren’t we?”

“Outside of a rare spawn, I’m pretty certain we can at least do one tower floor. Maybe two,” Max replied.

“I’m game!” Fowl exclaimed. “Besides, I’ve got enough gems saved up to hit level one in the tower after we reset the first ten levels.”

Everyone chuckled and stood.

“Bathroom break first?” their warrior asked.

“Please, I don’t want to hear whining when we’re inside,” Batrire replied.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

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[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/107917/sky-pride

[L2]

[L3]

60 Chapter 389 - Spending Gold

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2125940/chapter-389-spending-gold;[2025-03-14 15:03] //publish[2025-03-14 15:02]

Chapter 389 - Spending Gold

The tower was surrounded by forty-foot-tall walls that appeared to be made from a single piece of stone. Max had spent some time inspecting the white stone, which

seemed a stark contrast to the often darker-colored stones used for the roads, sidewalks, and buildings that weren't painted.

Only two entrances, one from the north and one from the south allowed access, and each required passing through a checkpoint.

As they approached, neither of the guards did much beyond nod their heads, staying on the opposite side of the opening.

"It appears we were expected," Fowl muttered as they made their way to the pair of guards at the small entrance in the wall.

"Well, we probably stand out," Max stated as he pointed back at the group they had passed. "Most of these groups have three or four dwarves, and we only have two."

"And not a single elf so far out here," Cordellia said. "I guess you short people don't like us tall people."

"It's not us, dear," Batrire replied. "Every dwarf knows we've reached out and offered to take anyone who comes. Your people are some of the best mages and archers, yet you don't often join us. The few who do are loved on and taken care of."

"So it's our problem?"

"It is," Tanila answered. "We're the problem… or perhaps a portion of our people are the reason for all this."

After walking past the guards, Max felt the full weight of the tower as they exited the five-foot-thick section of stone and entered the courtyard where the structure stood.

Rising upward, it was like a bulwark of strength, its base a worked stone section with runes carved along the entire first floor.

"Wow… that's… awe-inspiring."

Each of them nodded as they walked along the path to where a single guard stood from a chair they had been sitting in.

An older dwarf wearing leather armor and reading a book motioned for them to come forward.

"The famed party from Peltagow," he said with a grin. "You're all welcome to enter the tower, but please let me know what floor you'll be attempting. If we come to inspect and find you not on that floor, we will call the King's Guard, and they will begin inspecting the tower floors above the 50th."

"We're going to start on the first floor," Fowl informed the guard.

"Very well. Good luck and be safe. Also if you see a party on the floor, make sure to say hi. There are one or two on this one I believe right now, cutting their teeth."

Without much more, the dwarf moved back to his chair, a simple wooden one with armrests, and sat down. He opened his book and seemingly ignored them.

"Now that's a cush job," Cordellia said as they walked past him. "Reading all day? Must be an ex-healer."

***

Blinking, Max couldn't help but smile as he saw before them an open section of land, trees, and grass swaying in the gentle breeze. Down a ramp near where they had come in was a tower floor, easily three miles wide and vanishing off in the distance.

"Seems like old times," Fowl said. "So what's the plan?"

"Goats?" Cordellia asked.

"No… I'm thinking of something better," Max replied. "First, I want to see how strong these things are compared to what we've faced. After that I'll share my plan."

A scoff came from their ranger, but they all moved into the field and found the first pack of creatures the tower would throw at them. It was a wolf-like creature with two heads and was as tall as a dwarf.

"Bah, those things… I heard stories about them as a kid," Fowl muttered. "My grandfather used to tell us stories about twynharts and how they would come and eat our hearts and neck out simultaneously if we weren't good dwarves."

"That's a fun grandparent," Cordellia stated. "Nothing like scaring a kid to obedience."

"Focus," Max said. "Tanila, use the weakest spell you got. Go ahead and pick a spell you think will work best and use your familiar. Fowl, I want you to just fight one with your hammer and shield. Nothing fancy. And Cordellia—"

"Shoot one with a basic shot."

Nodding, Max grinned. "There are four, and I'll take the other one. Any questions?"

Everyone shook their heads and attacked. The tiny ice shard that Tanila sent killed the twynhart just as efficiently as the one Cordellia had shot.

Without waiting, their ranger shot the one Max was going to play with. When the last one reached them, Fowl bashed in the skull of the final one, killing it in a single blow.

"Well that was easy," their warrior muttered. "Now what?"

"Fowl and Batrire. You two go off down the right. Tanila and Cordellia, you two go down the left. I'll go down the middle. Based on our level and the power of these things, we should be able to kill these without any problems."

"And you'll be doing what?" Batrire asked. "Killing everything else?"

Grinning, Max shrugged.

"Part of me being in the middle is I can occasionally check on you all. The truth is I don't want to run the entire zone myself, and you all need to work for this as well. If everything goes as planned, we can avoid the other parties that might be in here while also getting a large amount of gems in the process."

"I'm ready whenever," Tanila said as Batrire finished casting her buff.

"Then let's go."

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Bob, you never stop surprising me.

A faint chuckle came from his skill as the yellow gems that had fallen on the ground lifted upward, floating toward where he was moving.

Well, I doubt you want to continually bend over and pick up the literal sea of them. Still it's good to know that we can control this many different pieces of stone and use them like this.

Nodding, Max watched as what looked like a swarm of yellow bugs flew toward him, each resting inside a small stone perfectly formed around the gem.

Twice, he had checked on both teams. Tanila and Cordellia had encountered a party of four dwarves and a human, and they had spent a few minutes talking, telling them what they were doing, and encouraging the group to be safe.

Fowl and Batrire were also making great progress. The dwarven warrior once again felt indestructible as he moved through the zone, killing every twynhart with a single hit.

Soon, they had cleared out almost every pack that wasn't taken for the length of the zone and met back in the middle, moving deeper into it.

Wiping a little sweat off his brow, Fowl took a drink from his waterskin.

"Gods, if the whole tower were like this, I'd never complain again."

"You've been complaining all day," their healer stated. "I don't want to bend over… it's too much work to bend over. Why do there have to be so many gems?"

Max couldn't help but laugh as Batrire's impersonation of Fowl continued to improve with each attempt.

"The good news is we are collecting a lot," he said. "We'll finish up with one last push toward the end of the tower floor and then see what the second floor holds. At this pace, we might be able to finish the first ten levels of the tower floor experience by the boss floor."

"Then what are we waiting on?" Cordellia asked. "I, for one, am excited at getting a chance to finish this up sooner rather than later."

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"So… rumor has it you five cleared most of the first floor in four hours. Is that true?"

"Does it matter?" Fowl asked. "I mean we pay a gold per day regardless. That's what Bidforo told us."

"It isn't about the gold," Fudumod explained. "There are dwarves above me, and if what we believed was going to happen is correct, they want to know. It's that simple."

Max could sense where this line of questioning was going and waved off their dwarven warrior, who was about to protest again.

“We did. I’m assuming you’re trying to gauge our strength by how fast we clear the floors and when the speed slows down, outside of a potential puzzle or maze floor.”

Grinning, the dwarf nodded, still reclining in his chair.

“Seems someone put some points into intelligence. You’re proving to be a team worthy of the reputation that follows you. Why, just a few weeks ago I heard one of our bards singing a song about your team and how you saved Peltagow from a dungeon break that hit all four directions at once.”

“And that doesn’t happen here, does it?”

“No. We aren’t like your kingdom. The power of the dungeons doesn’t build up like that. Why?”

Max tapped his temple.

“I like to learn whatever I can about each kingdom. The dwarves and the elves don’t have a problem with dungeon breaks. Or at least they’re so rare that many consider it more of a rumor than a reality. Which makes me wonder why the place I live has them.”

“An interesting question. Any theories?”

He’s smart… smarter than a dwarf who sits here and does this job should be.

I was thinking the same thing.

The slightest grin had been present for a second, and Max wondered who the dwarf was or what he might know.

“I have a few, but this isn’t the place to discuss them. Perhaps one day, we could grab a drink somewhere and have that talk.”

Tapping his finger against the book in his lap, Fudumod bobbed his head.

“We’ll see. For now, I’ll record that you all cleared two floors today. Don’t worry about paying me. Someone will send a bill each week to settle up. I’m letting you know that the Faction usually takes care of it, but just in case you want to pay for it yourself.”

“Appreciate that,” Tanila said as she motioned toward the exit. “It’s getting late, though, and even the mountain lights are dimming.”

Not saying another word, the dwarf nodded and waved at them once before opening his book again.

After getting into the carriage they had waiting on them, their mage poked Max.

“You sensed that, didn’t you?”

“Fudumod?”

“Yup. He’s not the one I’m guessing is usually there,” their mage replied. “Something about him feels off. Like he’s farming for information.”

“Are you accusing him of being a spy?” Fowl asked.

“Not a spy… just… someone who wants to learn about us and our true potential,” Max stated. “It’s like… did you ever play dunderball?”

“Did I!? I was one of the best,” their warrior proclaimed. “One time when I was twenty-three I had four scores! Four! If only I had been taller, I might have been a real contender.”

“No… you were never that great,” Batrire said. “Trust me, that time you got four wasn’t because of how good you were.”

“Bah! You still cheered for me.”

“I did,” their healer replied with a nod. “I was young, dumb and love-struck. Had you been a troll I liked, I probably would have cheered for you then.”

Before their warrior could protest, Max held out a hand.

“How many teams does your kingdom have?”

“Just one, same as your kingdom. Why?”

“How often do we play?”

“Uh… once a year. You know that. The rules are super strict, and no one is above level twenty. If you’re not going to be a professional dunderball player, you choose a different path.”

“And how do you know you’ll have a chance to become one?”

Grunting, Fowl shrugged.

“You’ll be scouted. Someone will approach you and your family about being a possible choice.”

Nodding, Max tapped his temple.

“That is what Fudumod is doing, I think. Two dwarves, both tower climbers, each potentially over the 50th floor. Why wouldn’t they have someone here to scout and see if the King’s Guard might have two new possible recruits.”

“But we don’t want to join the Guard,” Batrire protested.

“And yet, they won’t care,” Fowl muttered. “So what do we do?”

“Pretend to not be as good as we are, I guess,” Max replied. “Otherwise, we might have to deal with the king himself.”

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61 Chapter 390 - The First 2.5%

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Chapter 390 - The First 2.5%

Three days flew by quickly, and the boss on the fifth floor was a three-headed undead variation of the twynhart. Even with Max killing it, no skills had been acquired.

Only two yellow crystals had been their reward for such a kill.

Now, on the seventh floor, Max smiled as everyone held out their hands, a yellow gem gently pinched between their fingers.

“Ready?”

“Gods, yes!” exclaimed Fowl.

“For once, our warrior is right,” Cordellia added, still bouncing slightly on the balls of her feet.

“Then let’s do this,” Max said.

All five crushed the tiny object, a swirl of yellow-colored energy wrapping around their fingers, quickly absorbing through their skin.

Each sighed, and they all grinned as they stood in a dark forest, tall trees towering over them.

“That one felt amazing,” Tanila stated. “Like… better than any of the others, even the first ever.”

“It did,” Batrire said. “Almost as if it was something completely different. Like more power than usual.”

“Holy goblin nuts!” Fowl shouted. “Look at your stats!”

[Status Check]

*****

Max Hoste

19-Year-old Human Male

Level 1
Exp 453/1000
Tower Experience: 51.68%
STR: 1123+1831
DEX: 1101+1780
CON: 1047+1721
INT: 1018+1626
WIS: 1005+1607
Defense of the Dragon - 25%
Defense of the Demon - 25%
Demon Essence: - 1682
World Champion: - 20% Stat Increase
Bloodline: - 20% of the required 100% unlocked
Tower Stat Bonus: - 2.5%

*****

It's crazy… to think that 30+ stats were earned just by a few days of quickly grinding monsters any of us can easily solo.

Imagine what the stat increase will be like when you achieve the same effect from the other floors.

Chuckling to himself, Max watched his friends, and their eyes seemed to light up as each of them scanned their status screens.

Resetting ten levels of experience at a time was the best solution. I'm glad we could stop Fowl before he did all 50 levels of tower experience.

Perhaps one day he will invest a few points in intelligence, though I'm not certain he can afford as many as he might need. Perhaps this 2.5% will do for now.

"Why are you laughing?"

Coughing twice to stop himself, Max waved his had dismissively at Cordellia.

"Oh, I am just thinking about Fowl and how he almost gave up all his experience. Bob mentioned how the small addition of 2.5% to his intelligence might just help him be smart enough to prevent such a mistake again."

A finger rose on their warrior's hand as everyone began laughing, their voices and the sound of amusement carrying across the darkness of the tower floor they were in.

Off in the distance, a howl and a screech called out in reply.

"I guess we're done farming?" Batrire asked. "We want to head back to the Faction and reset ourselves?"

"Or we could do the boss on the ninth floor real quick and then head back," Max replied.

"I do like loot."

"Hey, that's my line!" Fowl quipped.

“I guess it’s settled,” their mage stated. “Lead on, oh warrior, with the improved intelligence stat.”

***

[Skill Consumed is of Lower Rank of Current Skill]

[Power stored for future use]

[Skill Consumed is of Lower Rank of Current Skill]

[Power stored for future use]

Like a skilled butcher, Max continued to hack off pieces from the corpse of the twenty-foot-tall werewolf he had beheaded in a single attack.

Near him, Fowl and Cordellia were grabbing the pieces he had freed from the main body and quickly storing them.

“Seems a bit underwhelming,” their dwarven warrior complained. “I mean, you didn’t even activate a skill.”

“Yeah… I was a bit surprised as well,” Max stated as he glanced down at the rest of the body that was starting to dissolve. “Still, we got all of its appendages and its head. I’m sure Erwini will be happy about that.”

“She might faint if you pull the head out just right,” Batrire called out. “Watching that thing bounce along this stone floor was almost comical for a moment.”

“Anything?” Tanila asked when she got near him.

“No. Everything was a lower rank.”

Nodding, she motioned to where a chest had appeared on the altar that sat in the middle of the clearing.

“Definitely anticlimactic,” their mage muttered. “Still, we can’t complain.”

Their ranger jogged to where the chest was and opened the black metal lid.

“Goblin nuts! Crystals again!”

“No loot?” Fowl asked as he moved to join her.

“No… seems the tower doesn’t love Max after all.”

Ignoring their jokes, their resident bald human retrieved the two yellow crystals and watched as the chest disappeared and a portal winked into being.

“Who knew we had two loot whores?”

“Hey now!” Fowl replied, wagging a finger at him. “Don’t be calling me a whore!”

“What about me?”

“He can call you whatever he wants,” their warrior called out, already moving toward the portal.

“Come back here you hairy… dwarf!”

Batrire sighed as she watched the pair disappear through the glowing blue exit and then turned to where Max and Tanila stood.

“He’s grown up a little, hasn’t he?”

“He has,” Max replied. “Both of us commented on that since we arrived. Right now I think he’s just hiding behind the frustration and anxiety of his parents and waiting to see them. Getting to do what we’re doing is good for him.”

“I’ll say. Knowing I got a free 2.5% boost to my stats for a few days of safe grinding is enough to make anyone smile.”

Nodding, Max motioned to the portal.

“You better get out there and check on him. Only Ockrim knows if he’ll have all his teeth by the time you do.”

“Bah, I know you really want me to leave you both alone!” their healer stated as she moved across the worked stone ground. “Still, enjoy yourselves!”

“He will!” Tanila called out.

“Oh really?” Max asked with a grin.

“You better!”

***

Clearing her throat for a third time, Erwini scratched her chin, apparently tired of how many times she had yanked on her beard.

“Almost a whole body… I… damn that old man,” she muttered.

Looking away from the boss’s arms, legs, and head, the Faction leader spun on her heel, her green eyes almost dancing in the light.

“You have easily done what was asked, and so now it’s my turn. If you’ll follow me, I’ll take you to the vault with the reagents and you can look through them.”

“The vault?” Max asked. “Everett only allowed us inside his once.”

Bobbing her head twice, the dwarf snapped her finger, and the pair of dwarves who had been almost drooling over the items laid out on the table and floor pulled out some knives and donned leather aprons.

“You all can follow me. They will handle the next part, and most don’t wish to watch what will happen.”

After moving through a few different hallways and down a couple of stairs, Erwini stopped before a section of a hallway and waved her hand before a brick.

Runes began to shimmer and appear, and soon, a doorway appeared. She flashed a grin at the party and pushed against the wall, opening up into a room that had been hidden behind it.

A small shimmering barrier stood at the entrance.

“You have a dimensional pocket?”

Gone was her smile, and both eyebrows came together as Erwini looked at him.

“You know what this is? I mean… I shouldn’t be surprised, but few would know what that barrier is unless they have seen one before. And you specifically said that Everett took you to his. How?”

“It was a giant metal door, thicker than a dwarf.”

She chuckled and shook her head.

“That wouldn’t be the real vault, just the lesser one. Most likely then he has the vault for the council set in a place like this. It would make sense as they have a few things even they won’t want people to know about.”

Taking a deep breath and letting it out slowly, Max tried not to curse.

“I guess some secrets can’t be shared, and this was one of those Everett felt at the time he couldn’t.”

Her frown grew for a moment, and then she grunted.

“I guess I’ll just have to tease him about this. Regardless, let’s get inside so I can shut this door.”

Leading the way, Max grinned as a few gasps came after she passed through, her body seeming to shift and change the moment she did.

“What—”

“Just go inside,” Max told Cordellia, who was standing there, about to ask a question he couldn’t answer. “It’s safe, trust me.”

“So many secrets,” Tanila whispered. “One day, you’ll have to stop forgetting everything you have failed to share.”

“Bah, hopefully, we can return soon to the other place,” Max informed her as they let everyone else go first. Then I can show you rather than simply telling you.”

Smiling, she nodded and moved through, leaving him the last one in the hallway.

It’s different and yet the same. You can sense it.

This one isn’t as strong as the one back at Buwingrid’s forge. Because of our world?

Who knows. For now, let’s see if these dwarves have anything of value we can use.

Nodding at no one but himself, Max moved through the portal, finding himself in a thirty-by-thirty-foot room that was lined with different chests and shelves along the walls.

In the middle was a single stone table, and a familiar sensation washed over him.

“You okay?”

Erwini’s question caught him off-guard, and he saw her puzzled look.

“Just not what I had imagined,” he lied. “Perhaps I thought it would be… bigger?”

“Bah, you and every man are always worried about size!”

A chortle came from Fowl, who went quiet when Max sensed Batrire elbow the dwarf.

“Now then, the wall on your right has chests with reagents. Feel free to inspect them and see if you can find something you like. Just leave it inside and let me know. Trying to take it out yourself might not be the best plan if you wish to keep your hand.”

“Booby-trapped chests?” Fowl asked.

“What kind of Faction would we be if we couldn’t protect our items? Beyond a room that most couldn’t find, even if one did, they wouldn’t like the few traps we have in here. This brings me to my reminder again: Don’t try to take anything. Only a few of us in the Faction have access, and I don’t want to have to clean up blood in here.”

With her sharp instructions heard, Max moved to the wall and began to open the chests one at a time. Most were filled with various organized items, and the first few were designed for leather working. Up next were three chests filled with alchemy items.

We could start to make some stuff… though I’m not certain I want to do that right now.

Unless you’re feeling the need to use the ogre testicles for something, it’s not a good use of your time. Even now, you know that perhaps you could make one or two elixirs with a single point or two of a stat.

Humming to himself, he continued inspecting each chest and froze when he tried to open one.

It was a white metal chest that seemed to vibrate with power. His trap-detection skill had stopped him, not giving off a red glow but warning him of something.

“Erwini?” he asked, pointing at it with his hand.

“Oh, yeah, that one! Give me a second!”

She moved quickly to where it sat on a stone shelf and lifted it, carrying it to the table and then hesitated a moment before lifting the lid.

“Wait… why didn’t you open this one?”

“Call it a tower climber’s intuition. It’s different from the others not just in the color of the metal but also seems to give off a… an aura.”

“I have no doubt that is because of what’s inside,” she muttered as the dwarf peered in for herself. “You can’t have this… it would take a lot more before I might consider giving this to anyone. A lot more.”

Moving to where she stood, Max crowded next to her and glanced inside, his eyes widening at what was so precious.

We need that.

Yes... yes we do.

“What’s in the box?” Fowl asked.

62 Chapter 391 - What’s in the Vault

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2128199/chapter-391-whats-in-the-vault;[word2025-03-17 11:01,publish2025-03-15 15:02]

Chapter 391 - What’s in the Vault

A tsk came from Erwini as she ran her tongue across her lips.

“You know what that is?”

“It has a lot of different names, but many call it a Fire-Forged Bar. I can tell by—”

“A FIRE-FORGED BAR!”

Both Max and Erwini looked at the dwarven warrior, who stood there, arms slightly raised, both eyes wider than ever before and with his mouth hanging open.

“Yes, now please close that trap and let us talk.”

His friend’s jaw began to move, but Max saw the look Erwini had given Fowl, and the warrior quickly clamped his jaw shut.

Max heard Batrire mutter “impossible,” and when the red-headed dwarf turned her attention back to him, she slowly nodded.

“Yes… it is one of the two the Faction owns. Everett has one, I believe.”

“That lying bas—” Max stopped himself, seeing an eyebrow raise as he started to curse. Clearing his throat, it was his turn to grimace. “Let’s just say when I get back to Peltagow, I’m going to talk to a white-haired man, who didn’t tell me he had a second one.”

“Ehh… Technically, he doesn’t have a *secona* one. I have one, and he has one. So I wouldn’t blame him,” she replied, reaching in and pulling out the metal bar.

With a *clink* she sat it down on the stone table, and everyone came close to inspect it.

Easily nine inches long, the bar had barely fit in the dwarf’s hand.

Red coloring that almost radiated with flames gave off a warm sensation.

“How special is that?” Cordellia asked.

“Special enough to get any dwarven crafter to do basically whatever you want,” Fowl replied, his eyes almost level with the stone as he bent down. “These are what those who can craft legendary and above desire. Only a few dwarves can really use them well enough to make something worthy of the metal.”

“He is right,” Erwini stated. “The truth is we have often discussed using the pair and crafting something with them. Losing Baldwin hurt, as he was our best weapon crafter in our Faction. Still, I heard—”

Her head twisted so fast it might have broken her own neck as she squinted and looked up at Max.

“You… no… that would be impossible… yet why…”

Erwini began to blink rapidly as she studied Max, doing his best to look innocent under her gaze.

“Why would he want you to look through our crafting materials? Do you know who the crafter is that he has mentioned making weapons for his members?”

“I’ve seen him a few times,” Max replied. “Does a good job actually.”

“Yet how would you know what one of these is if Everett didn’t tell you he had one?”

Pulling a book out of his storage, Max opened it and flipped through a few pages.

“Here we go.”

With his finger on the page he had turned to, Max set the worn journal on the counter.

Elven Blue Ingot

Fire-Forged Bar

Dark Star Core

Elemental Heart

The Faction leader looked up at Max and the list he had, each of them with a small description on potential uses for them next to it.

“How do you have something like this? I mean… it would make sense that you might, but no crafter would freely share those secrets and knowledge.”

Her gaze hadn’t changed, and a grunt came from Fowl.

“Just tell her. It will be easier.”

Looking at the warrior, who was slowly sneaking his hand across the table toward the bar, she grabbed the bar and picked it up before he could touch it.

“Tell me what?”

Max looked at the other three, who shrugged, each making a face that didn't bestow confidence in which option was the best.

"Everett bound himself to me to learn some of my secrets. Would you be willing to do the same?"

Two sharp coughs came from the woman as she took a step back, bar still in hand.

"Bind myself to you? Like with a binding rod?!"

"With just that. It's the only way you'll find out why he has tasked me with what he has."

Her red beard danced as her cheeks moved, a sign of her jaw clenching and unclenching as her nose did a small dance.

"But… why? What could be so—"

Her words stopped as she glanced down at the bar in her hand.

"The tower… so fast… you five are past the 50th floor…"

"None of those were questions," Max stated. "Still if you want answers, I'm going to need you to commit to me like Everett did."

"And they all did this?" she asked, waving the bar at all of the team.

Bursting out in a peal of laughter, Max shook his head.

"No. They are family, and I trust them with my life. Forgive me when I say you're just someone who is in the Faction I signed up for. Without the same kind of commitment Everett made, I won't share anything else."

Erwini frowned and with her free hand tugged on her beard braid for a few seconds.

"What do I get out of this? I mean, a binding rod isn't a small thing."

"Which tells you then that Everett did it because he knew it was worth it," Max replied, crossing his arms over his chest. "Just know, it's worth it."

She rubbed both eyes as she sighed and after about ten seconds, lowered her hand, and looked at him.

"I'm warning you, I'm not one to be trifled with!" she exclaimed, waving and pointing the Fire-Forged Bar in his face. "You better make this worth it or I'll… I'll do something!"

Nodding, Max motioned to the bar in her hand.

"You going to keep that or let me have it?"

"Bah, you can go hump a goat—"

The sound of Batrire clearing her throat caused Erwini's face to turn red almost immediately, and the Faction leader visibly winced.

“Ahh… yeah… forgive me. I’m a little bit like the color of my hair.”

“Oh I get it,” Max replied. “I’m in love with a redhead.”

***

“You sure you want to keep drinking?”

Erwini nodded and poured her fourth glass of alcohol, her dazed expression not yet gone.

“Legendary crafter… a warrior… stats so high…”

Max shrugged and tapped the table again.

“You wanted to know. Now tell me, was the binding rod worth it?”

Downing the drink in a single gulp, the dwarf nodded, storing the glass.

“Not many things are worth that rod… but that was. I understand now why Everett spoke so highly of you and your team. Still… are you wanting to craft?”

Leaning back, Max ran his hand along the red couch, appreciating how soft to the touch it was.

“I would. For a lot of reasons, but right now what I really want to do is get back to my team and know what I have to give in order to get that bar.”

“Bah,” Erwini scowled. “Back to the one thing I don’t want to just give up! I have no doubt you could create something legendary with it, but we’re talking about a bar so rare the king would gladly trade above its worth just to have it.”

“Which goes back to the question of how you got one.”

Snorting, she shook her head and then used her thumb to point at the wall behind her desk.

“I’ve got another rod if you want to learn that secret.”

“Perhaps not,” he replied. “Still, what would it take?”

She grimaced and scratched her beard.

“For that? Six clear crystals.”

“Are you saying that because you and I both know we’re not allowed to fight in the tower past the 50th floor?”

The smallest smile formed.

“Not completely, but the power those would provide and knowing that the bar would be used by a member who is attempting the impossible… it would make it worth the trade. Bags of gold wouldn’t make me want to sell it.”

“So how do I get it so our team can do the 50th floor?”

“That I can’t help. You’ll have to take that up with the king. Good luck with that one. He’s not easily swayed. Perhaps you should return to Peltagow and undertake the task there.”

It would be possible. A day or two each week. Surely we could defeat a floor in a day?

Perhaps, but would you want your skills used like that? Remember, you promised to visit Rakonath, and the time has come to do that soon.

Frowning, Max realized that Erwini was mimicking his facial expression, and she most likely thought he was upset with her or with that news.

“Ignore me; I’m just lost in thought about that prospect. Still, I’m open to the trade and will gladly look at getting enough of those for the bar.”

Rolling her eyes, the woman nodded and started to tap her fingers together.

“Now then, if what you said is possible, when might you want to craft for me? I could easily trade other materials that you might want.”

Seeing the row of white teeth between the woman’s red beard, Max could only imagine how excited the dwarf was about having someone like him crafting.

“I could be convinced to do so. Each item would be partial payment toward the metal I want.”

“You may not have enough time to craft that many items,” Erwini said. “Still, I’m excited to see what you can make and go from there.”

Cracking his neck, Max stood and pointed at the door.

“Then let’s get started. Tomorrow, we plan on starting the second part of the tower grind. If what you want isn’t too much, I could probably make something real quick.”

Faster than he had expected, the Faction leader was on her feet, moving toward the door.

***

“I’m just saying,” Fowl muttered as he pulled a green elixir from the chest, “why would we get one of these now?”

“He’s complaining about free stats,” Cordellia said as she pulled the top off hers. “What happened to the dwarf who never passed up a chance for loot?”

Max smiled and looked at the bottle and stored it.

“Not going to drink it?”

Shaking his head at Tanila, he withdrew the two green crystals from the boss chest.

“It might not work, since I drank that elixir back in Rumstant. Doing so would then be a waste. Besides, I can give this to my sister when I see her next.”

“Always the nice guy,” Batrire stated after wiping her lips. “Still this gave me five Dexterity, so I’m not complaining.”

“What are the odds of another undead boss?” Max asked as he studied the crypt they were in.

“Higher than you might expect,” Fowl answered. “You do realize we’re dwarves, and one thing we’re good at facing is the undead. Between large axes and hammers, we also have healers who occasionally take the holy spells that grant bonus damage to them.”

Batrire let out a grunt at their warrior’s statement.

“A waste… a bloody waste. What kind of healer would give up the very spells we need to keep you alive for a buff that only works against a single type of creature?”

“Don’t we all have those kinds of things?” Cordellia asked. “I mean, my bow works great against certain creatures and is absolutely worthless against others. Golems, undead, slime stuff. How many of those were impossible for me to injure? Not all of us can be like wonderboy and be good against everything.”

Grinning as he sensed everyone looking at him, Max shrugged and pointed at the portal.

“We’re capped for the second part of the tower, and tomorrow we’re headed to the castle to see Fowl’s parents. How about we stop talking about how great I am and focus on what we need to do.”

“Besides take a bath?” Batrire asked as she gave their warrior a sniff. “Some of us smell.”

Fowl had started to frown but stopped, lifting up his arm and smelling his pit.

“Gods that does smell ripe!” he exclaimed. “Why didn’t anyone say anything?”

“We did,” Tanila muttered. “You just didn’t pick up on the hint.”

As the others began to tease their warrior, Max watched Tanila as her hand seemed to be rubbing her belly just slightly.

“Everything okay?” he whispered.

“Yeah. For a moment I thought I had felt this little one move, but we’re still months from when that should happen.”

Closing his eyes and putting a hand on her stomach, Max began to shut out all the noise and distraction around him, letting his Sonar skill do what it could when he focused.

The faint outline of a child appeared in his mind, and he could sense the heartbeat racing like the wings of a hummingbird.

Opening his eyes and taking his hand off, Max smiled at her.

“They appear okay.”

“You know that’s not fair.”

“Would you rather me not check?”

Shaking her head, Tanila sniffed and ran a thumb along one of her eyes.

“No, I’m glad you can. Just a little jealous.”

Taking her hand in his, Max motioned to the portal with his head.

“Well, let’s go. I know Fowl can’t be the only one who needs a bath.”

One of her eyebrows raised, and Tanila gave him a sideways look.

“You’re not telling me I stink, are you?”

“Gods no,” he replied with a grin. “I’ve got more than enough points in intelligence to not be that stupid.”

63 Chapter 392 - A Rare Offer

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2129924/chapter-392-a-rare-offer;[word2025-03-17 11:01,publish2025-03-16 14:02]

Chapter 392 - A Rare Offer

Fowl’s hands pressed against his formal jacket for a third time.

“You going to be okay?” Max asked as he stood beside his friend. “There’s nothing to be nervous about. You’re a tower climber and a successful one too.”

His friend looked up at him and shook his head.

“We’re meeting my parents and the king! The bloody king!”

Nodding, he looked at his own clothes, glad to have had them cleaned and stored afterward. He noticed each of the women was also making a few last adjustments to the dresses they were wearing.

None had been happy that morning when an early message came to the Faction house saying that the king would be taking part in this reunion. The chaos that had ensued as both dwarves tried to comprehend such an honor while also wondering what they were going to wear had surprised even Max.

“Yes, but that’s because he knows how strong you are. Again, I’m here, and you have nothing to fear. This should prove your point to your parents even more.”

A small grunt came as his friend turned and looked at himself again in the mirror in the room they were waiting in.

“Maybe… still… you don’t know my mom… She can be…”

“A word I’m not allowed to use,” Batrire said as she came up from behind. “You look amazing, my love. Now stop fidgeting, or you’ll start to sweat and smell like the backside of an ogre. None of us wants that smell to reach the king.”

Turning, Fowl smiled, and Max watched as the dwarf’s eyes sparkled, taking in the bright yellow dress that Batrire was wearing.

“You look radiant, my love. Like a sunflower, reaching up to the sun, showing its beauty to anyone who can glimpse even a part of it.”

Both of their healer’s cheeks went red, and Max felt his eyebrows raising on their own.

When did he become a poet?

You did notice him reading a book the other night at dinner. Perhaps he did put a few points into intelligence after all.

Chuckling to himself, Max glanced at Tanila, who was wearing her green dress. The same one she had worn before still looked perfect on her.

Next to her, Cordellia was shifting slightly in the blue dress she had on, tugging at the sides as she used one of the many mirrors that lined the walls of the small waiting area.

Thick padded chairs made from a combination of stone and metal seemed more like works of art than a place to put one’s backside. They were set in perfect locations for private conversations. Mirrors with gold and other fine metals had prime wall space to allow one to ensure everything about them was ready for what would come next.

Four suits of armor, all larger than Max had imagined they might be, centered the room as their empty helms watched over all of them.

Even the carpet told a story, a battle of dwarves fighting against a horde of goblins riding wargs.

“You look amazing as well,” Max said as he moved to where Tanila was.

“That’s not going to cut it,” she replied, winking at him before looking back at herself in the mirror. “I’m guessing he pulled that out of the book he had the other day?”

“I was thinking the same thing. Now tell me, you don’t seem nervous on the outside, but I can tell there is a little bit of reservation still. What are you afraid of?”

She took a breath in slowly and let it out at the same pace.

“Dwarves rarely get to meet their king. Most elves would never dream of meeting… the king. Did you ever expect to meet your queens?”

Shaking his head, he saw her nod once.

“For this to happen, with two of the royal lines, one must wonder what is going to come next. You and I both have our fears about them being forced from our party. This is a real and present threat. A dwarf sees the king as a… father… but a loving

one. One whose word and command are absolute. King Dagon Stormfall has sat on this throne for over two hundred years. His reign has been one of mostly peace and prosperity. Even my… king would not anger him."

"Because he's that strong?"

She nodded and motioned to the door they had come in.

"No guards, no one to watch us. Why do you think they would do that with five people they know are all said to be above the 50th floor in the tower?"

Max fidgeted with his red armband for a moment and frowned.

"So most would believe he could defeat all of us."

A small chuckle came as she shook her head.

"Yes… *most* . Even though I'm certain his guard will be there, do not think for a moment that he could not defend himself and most likely win against us all."

"We're not planning on doing anything stupid? Are we?" Cordellia asked as she came closer to where they were standing.

"No… I'm not planning on doing anything stupid. Fowl might, though."

"Bah, don't you worry about me," their warrior replied, turning away from the mirror he had hogged since arriving in the room. "I'll be better behaved than any of ya."

For what seemed like forever but was only another ten minutes, they made small talk, occasionally adjusting each other's outfits before the wood door that was inlaid with gold carving opened up.

"The king is ready for you."

Fowl nodded and held out his arm, letting Batrire take it, and they walked ahead of the rest of them, Max and Tanila following, with Cordellia at the end.

The dwarven butler gave a slight bow, his brown hair held in place with a paste that didn't let a single strand move astray. Even his beard was waxed, almost to the point of being rigid like a stick.

Once all five were in the hallway, another butler was waiting, their black and white attire marked with a red and gold embroidered hammer and crown on the back. Just a little farther down the hallway were a pair of guards, each with a set of plate armor Max had recalled from the day they tried to get permission to see Fowl's parents.

No aura came from the duo, yet as they led the way toward the throne room, their gait seemed to announce how dangerous they could be.

So many here are strong. Even those butlers… I would venture that each of them has been in the tower.

Why would they have butlers in the tower? What skill could they provide?

Consider what I’m going to say as just what I would do. You live for hundreds and potentially a thousand years if you are strong enough as the dwarven king. Even you should live to be well over a hundred or possibly two hundred years without beating the tower.

If you’re going to rule, you’ll want people who are loyal and strong and with you for a long period of time. How much effort is it then to put together teams which will help those who serve you get stronger?

But I don’t believe the queens did that.

They will live longer if someone does not kill them, but still two hundred years of life would be a long time for them. Yet for this king, that is nothing. So what if it takes a decade or two? Who cares about the gold or the cost? Why not spend time and money to outfit those in the same gear as they progress?

The sound of boots, heels, and armor quietly echoed off the worked stone hallway as they made their way along it. Paintings and tapestries lined the hall, and the few doors that were set back from within it were all closed. Up ahead was a larger pair of double doors, easily twelve feet tall and waiting to be opened by another pair of guards in the same armor as their escort.

It does make sense. Then, if that is the case, this entire castle is an army at his fingertips.

Which is why the king must not fear much.

Upon reaching the door, the butler and their escort stopped.

The dwarf turned, smoothed his vest once, and then nodded at Fowl and Batrire.

“You know the rules. Stay behind me, do not pass me, and wait for him to speak.”

Pausing, the man leaned slightly to ensure Max’s and his eyes met.

“No weapon, unless the king asks for you to display it, must ever be drawn. To do so would result in your death.”

The briefest nod was given, and their escort faced the door and motioned to the guards who stood beside it.

Tell me again why I was singled out for that.

You’re the one who has a bloody reputation. No doubt your arena exploits might make a few uncomfortable.

As the doors swung open, a slight buzz of conversation went silent, and Max got an eyeful over his dwarven friends’ heads of what lay beyond.

Inside was a smaller hall than he had expected after the stories Fowl and Batrire had told.

Still it was over fifty yards long and a good twenty yards wide as his Sonar was just out of the reach of where the king sat on his stone throne.

It was made of a black stone and shone brighter than a mirror might if it weren't so dark.

Lined up along both sides of the room were guards, each stationed at one of the five pillars that ran to the ceiling.

Everywhere was stone, carved in intricate ways, and even the pillars had etchings that Max could feel were almost breathing from how well they had been crafted.

A single carpet led to a dozen yards from the three steps and the throne Dagon Stormfall sat on.

The tiniest throat clearing signaled the movement of their butler, and all five of them walked forward, their steps now silenced by the material underneath.

Each guard gave off a slight aura of power, and next to the king at the base of the steps were two more dwarves, one the woman he recognized from the day before, her black hair tied back in braids, and another dwarven woman with blond hair and a scar that took a bit of her beard out on the left.

Almost twenty yards ahead on the left were three dwarves standing with a similar butler.

Max immediately saw the resemblance Fowl bore, having his father's nose and his mother's thick beard.

Their eyes were narrowed as they watched them approach.

Yet in all this, Max's Sonar went wild the moment he felt Dagon Stormfall enter it.

No aura came.

No presence at all was there for a moment, and then it would come, vanishing again a second later.

He could sense the dwarf and knew that he was on the throne, yet his eyes and skill seemed at odds, wanting to admit the king's presence and deny it at the same time.

That… is an interesting skill.

What is it? I mean… how?

Some sort of anti-detection ability. Something almost as strong as your Sonar. The fact that you can detect him, even as it is, means the two of you are equally matched in that skill.

Does he know my skill is trying to detect him?

Bob was silent as they continued along the carpet.

The slightest grin appeared through the white hair of the beard that seemed to flow from the king's chiseled face. His size was hidden as he sat, leaning forward slightly, one arm on the stone throne.

Both of his black eyes were locked on Fowl and Batrire, almost not paying any attention at all to the rest of them.

It does not appear so.

Their butler stopped and gave a deep bow, one that each of them mimicked.

Just three yards away stood Fowl's parents and his youngest brother, eyes fixed on the one who had requested to see them.

"My king. May I present to you the tower climbers and adventurers you have requested come today. Fowl Hammerfall, warrior and third son of Orstein and Greeta Hammerfall. Batrire Lightbrew, their healer and wife-to-be of Fowl Hammerfall."

Max sensed and saw the slightest reaction from both of their warriors parents, each somehow able to stop from doing more than widening their eyes and clenching their jaws. Grondir, however, failed that task, his mouth hanging open at the announcement.

"Their mage, Tanila; ranger, Cordellia; and the human warrior, Max Hoste."

After speaking, the dwarf moved to stand next to the other butler, and Max watched as Dagon Stormfall scooted forward slightly on his throne.

"Welcome, brother and sister. And welcome to you other three. I have long been waiting to meet the pair who bring honor to Ockrim."

The king's smile seemed to grow after he finished speaking and stood, his size now on full display for everyone to see.

He's as tall as Cordellia...

Actually, I think he's just a little bit taller.

64 Chapter 393 - Orders or Choices

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2130020/chapter-393-orders-or-choices;[word2025-03-17 11:01,publish2025-03-16 15:02]

Chapter 393 - Orders or Choices

King Dagon Stormfall's shoulders were wider than Max would have imagined as the dwarf stood there, slowly coming down the steps toward them. His armor was a bronze-red color, and it took him just a few seconds to realize what the scales were made from.

Those are dragon scales!

Probably not a good time to mention to him you have a dragon then. Look at his pants and arms.

Even without Bob's leading, Max had already taken in the full sight of a dwarf who easily outweighed him by probably twice as much. The king's build was that of a stocky dwarf who just happened to be taller than anyone else and wider than almost two grown men.

Each step didn't make a sound as his boots barely clicked against the stone floor.

Never did his dark eyes leave the group as he descended, the smile almost chiseled upon his face.

"My king!" Fowl gasped, dropping to a knee and bending over further.

Batrire and Fowl's family didn't waste a second, matching his movement.

Cordellia started to mimic them but saw that Max and Tanila did nothing more than bend slightly at the waist.

"Rise," Dagon said, his voice booming as he held up a hand. "There is no need to do that. Fowl Hammerfall and Batrire Lightbrew, you two of all should be able to stand like those of my court."

A cough came from the butler who had escorted them, and a small snap was heard by Max as the other one instructed his parents to stand.

"Forgive me, my king. I… I do not know how this should all work."

Chuckling, the ruler of the dwarves continued to walk until he was just a few feet from Fowl and held out his hand.

"Will this work, son of Hammerfall?"

Their warrior immediately reached out and shook Dagon's hand, pumping it half a dozen times before the king freed himself from the dwarf's grip.

"And Batrire. It is an honor to meet you."

Max couldn't believe it when the king leaned forward and held out his arms, pulling their healer close and kissing her on the forehead like a father might a child.

"Thank… thank you, my king!" Batrire exclaimed, her voice cracking at first.

"And you three, companions of my children! Welcome! I have heard many tales about your feats! Come, let us retire to a different room where I have some beverages and food waiting for us so we can talk as men and women and not a king and citizens."

Without waiting for them to respond, Dagon turned and moved toward the right wall, where a set of doors opened up, leading into a room where amazing smells immediately began to come out.

"Let's go," the butler whispered. "After him."

All of them quickly began to follow the dwarf, who was hurrying to lead them in the direction their king had gone.

Max saw the look of confusion or what he thought must be on Fowl's parents' faces. Both of them had raised eyebrows, slightly cocked, and mouths that were almost open. All three of his family members were quickly ushered by their attendant, and he could sense their steps being an unnatural cadence.

I'm guessing this wasn't the greeting they were expecting.

Did you receive the greeting you expected from the queens? I can imagine how your friends must feel right now. For a dwarf to meet their king in a private setting is a rare thing from what I have learned from you and your friends. If what he said about his family is true, then yes, I doubt they were expecting the king to lavish such great compliments upon their son.

As they drew closer to the room, the scent of cooked meats and fresh bread reached their noses, and Max found his mouth watering.

Even though I don't have to eat, I cannot imagine passing up food by the way this stuff smells!

He heard Cordellia's and Tanila's stomachs both let out a growl, and each woman did their best to pretend such noise didn't come from them.

The moment they stepped into the room, Max saw that this *small* area was easily twice the size of the room they had waited in and had a large table on one side filled with a large assortment of food. Five different animals were all cooked to what looked and smelled like perfection. Three different kinds of bread were all ready to be consumed. Half a dozen different desserts, fresh fruit, and vegetables were all available.

Servants stood at the ends of the table with plates, and a few stood over the meat on the other side of the table, sharp knives and forks ready to carve whatever someone might want.

The place Max realized all the dwarves were looking though was a large cask on a different table, the image of the king's head burnt into the wood.

"Dear gods, is that—"

"Ahh yes, you noticed my personal brew!" Dagon called out as he reached the front of the table where most of the meat was. "I figured this should be a time of celebration and wanted to let you all partake in the feast we are going to enjoy!"

"But… but why?"

Fowl's question caused the king to turn around, an empty plate he had picked up in his hand, apparently ready to ladle high with food.

"Why? Surely you must know, Fowl Hammerfall! You and your bride-to-be are to join my Guard!"

A pit grew in his stomach, and behind him he sensed his friend's father falling, fainting as the dwarf crashed to the ground.

"Someone get a healer," the king muttered, turning around and holding his plate out to the dwarf, who had already cut off a giant piece of roasted boar.

"No."

Batrire's voice sounded so quiet, and yet it almost echoed in the room as dwarves had begun to move to obey their king.

"Excuse me?" Fowl asked, turning to look at their healer.

She was shaking her head, and Max could see her fists were clenched by her sides.

"I said no," she declared, this time having found the strength to speak boldly. "I will not abandon my friends to simply stand here and be nothing more than a figure."

A few gasps came, and Max tried to sense the shifting dwarves in the room, some of the King's Guard all shifting slightly as they stood in the four corners, eyes fixed upon the dwarf who just denied their ruler's command.

"I'm sorry, little one," Dagon said, not turning around, motioning to the servant to keep cutting off more meat. "This is not something you get a say in."

"You bet your hairy ogre nuts I do!" she exclaimed, stomping her foot. "I didn't come here to join this Guard or be told by anyone what I can and can't do! I came here to tell Fowl's parents about how wrong they were about their son and how great he is! I came here to get married and have a wedding every dwarven girl dreams of! What I didn't come for was for a dwarf I've never met to *tell me* what the rest of my life is going to look like after they haven't done a single thing for me besides apparently rig a contest so that Fowl's and my parents would win an award and perhaps make me more inclined to obey your commands!"

Each word was emphasized with her displeasure, and Max almost winced as he saw the king react just slightly when the accusation of the contests was said out loud.

"Batrire, please—"

"No!" she shouted, turning and cutting Fowl off. "We didn't come here for this."

Pointing a finger at Max, Tanila, and Cordellia, their healer looked at them and tried to smile.

"They are our family… my family, and I will not leave them. No matter who tells me to. Not even you."

Her last words were almost a whisper, and the clattering of a knife hitting the ground, one of the servants having lost it, shattered the moment slightly.

Before them a scene started to unfold.

Fowl stepped forward and raised his hand slowly, his thumb wiping away a few tears that were streaming down Batrire's cheek.

His head moved up and down slowly, a smile starting to form.

Meanwhile, the king had turned around, and Dagon's face was beginning to look a little sunburned as it took on a reddish tone.

"You think you have a choice!?" he bellowed.

His outburst felt like a wave of power had been sent at them, almost as if a large hammer had slammed into them.

Neither dwarf acknowledged the king; instead, both grabbed the other's hands and looked deeply into one another's eyes.

"You mean that, don't you?" Fowl asked. "We wouldn't abandon them, no matter what."

"How many children do we owe them? How many poor dwarves will be cursed with a name that starts with Max or Seth?"

Laughter came from their warrior as Dagon almost began to have smoke coming from his nostrils, the way they flared and his eyebrows danced as one.

"My king!" The butler who had been leading them moved forward a step, holding a hand out. "Do not lose your temper!"

Max moved toward his friends, sensing the shift in the room, guards moving in slightly and the other dwarves backing up.

"No! This is my home! Who will defy me in my own home!?" the king called out.

His voice rang out across the room, and Max could see the fire that almost seemed to rage in the leader of the dwarves' eyes.

And then a presence from behind told him Tanila wasn't taking this any longer.

"It is a shame," their mage said, her voice calm and measured. "For so long my father had told me that King Dagon Stormfall was a gracious leader to his people. Never forcing their hand and that he led with a fatherly love that sickened him. Perhaps he was wrong; you are more like him than I realized. Pity. For once, I had hoped to meet a king I could admire."

Gasps came, and a sword appeared in the hand of a dwarf on Max's left.

Dagon's eyes blinked a few times rapidly, his nostrils still flaring as he took in the sight of Tanila. Her hair and eyes glowed gold, and the aura that came off her was overwhelming.

"A daughter? Of Savantus? Why are you here?!"

"Because for whatever reason, Ockrim has put Fowl and Batrire in my life and then added Max and Cordellia," she replied, back straight and not backing down as the king of this mountain stared her down. "They are my family, not some elf who sits on a throne imprisoning, torturing or killing anyone who doesn't bend to his will. Who knew it seemed to have spread here finally."

Max looked at the King’s Guard, who was drawing close, sword and shield now out and in full plate armor.

“If you make a move,” he growled, “I will show you why I am the master of the arena in Peltagow.”

Another guard suddenly had a hammer and shield present on his other side.

“My king!” the butler shouted. “Look at what is happening!”

Snorting, Dagon glanced around the room, finally noticing what was about to take place.

Behind him, meat was on the floor, dropped from the metal plate he had smashed in his massive hand.

Two guards were armed for battle and approaching the *guests* he had invited here.

Before him, two dwarves stood, now shoulder to shoulder with Max, plate armor covering Fowl and Batrire in her healer garb.

“I…” Dagon sputtered for a moment and then took a deep breath, letting it out and holding up both hands, the broken plate falling onto the stone floor.

“Stop. Put the weapons and armor away. This shouldn’t happen. To act in such a way would be a disgrace upon the throne I have sat in for over a century!”

Everyone froze as the massive dwarf huffed a few times, his eyes fixated upon their mage.

“It would appear the daughter of Savantus is right. I have not acted like the king I have long proclaimed to be.”

His eyes moved to Fowl and Batrire, and a slight frown appeared.

“I must ask for your forgiveness. I… did not think of what you two might desire and simply thought the honor of being in my Guard would be too much to pass up. My queen is usually by my side, and I’m afraid that I have acted in haste, not listening to her council, which no doubt would have prevented such a thing as this from happening.”

Motioning with a hand at Max and the other two, all three now wearing their armor, weapons still not present, he slowly smiled.

“What kind of friends would risk everything to fight against a king and his guard?”

“The kind of friend every dwarf dreams about,” Fowl stated. “The kind of friend that is family.”

Nodding slowly, Dagon clapped his hands and motioned at the guards prepared for a fight.

“Return to your posts. Someone get me a drink. I need to sit down and relax.”

Max felt multiple dwarves let out a sigh of relief as their king moved toward a chair and plopped down.

“Never a dull moment,” Cordellia muttered. “And for a moment I was ready to see how great you were in a fight like this.”

Chuckling, Max shook his head.

“No… I would have grabbed you all and ran.”

65 Chapter 394 - My Precious

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2131976/chapter-394-my-precious;[word2025-03-17 14:11 ,publish2025-03-17 14:02]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

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The only thing Badger hates more than rookies are dungeon owners with no respect for the rules.
The Halfling known as Badger is sent to show the Department of Dungeon's newest Elven recruit the ropes. Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, Ferrisdae is everything the aged inspector is not. Armed with youthful optimism and a sharp mind, her unwavering enthusiasm quickly gets under his skin.
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* Has been described as a buddy cop high fantasy staring Ron Swanson and Rapunzel (Tangled)

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Chapter 394 - My Precious

Multiple chairs had been pulled up in a circle, and Dagon sat in his chair, slightly larger than the rest and was downing his fourth tankard of his private brew.

He could taste the difference, having tried Batrire's father's. Unlike all the other alcohol he had consumed, this one didn't leave any kind of aftertaste and was smoother than water.

Next to Fowl, his parents both sat there, his father now awake, neither having said a word.

Grondir was bouncing his knee nervously, stuck between his mother and the king.

"Are you two ever going to talk?" Batrire asked, eyes focused on the weaponsmiths. "I mean, are you even going to acknowledge that he is sitting before you?"

"I am well aware of who is before me," Fowl's mother replied, her tone sounding haughty and unimpressed. "Regardless of what he has accomplished in the tower, our… Fowl chose to leave the family business, forsaking the history we have carried for generations. Doing so is an affront to our line and to Ockrim."

"That's a load of ogre shite!" Batrire shot back, almost rising from her chair. "He's been offered the highest position by your king, and you still can't see that Ockrim must be pleased with what he has done!"

"And yet he isn't one of the King's Guard," Greeta Hammerfall replied. "Perhaps if he was, then I could admit something good came from his choice."

"Forget it," Fowl said, cutting off their healer as she started to respond. "She's not worth it. I… I finally see that I don't need her approval anymore."

Max listened to his friend, heartbroken at those words. Even though he knew Fowl meant them, the tone of which he spoke conveyed how painful it hurt to say.

His mother leaned back, shaking her head as if she had been slapped and then snorted.

"See! He doesn't—"

"Quiet!"

Dagon's command cut off the very words in her throat, making the woman choke.

Shifting in his seat, the king sat up and set his tankard down on a side table, eyes moving between the pair.

"Do you really wish to lose a son that I think so highly of that I would offer him a position in my Guard? How can you be so… stubborn like a mule that you cannot see how much Ockrim must love him?"

Fowl’s father started to open his mouth, but as the very first sound began to come from his lips, Greeta turned, and whatever look she gave him silenced him.

“Gods, Dad, aren’t you ever going to grow a pair?”

“Grondir Hammerfall!”

Fowl’s mother started to rise and then stopped as Dragon started to roar with laughter.

“Oh, my boy! Perhaps you should join my guard if you have a pair as large as you must to face down this woman!”

Max watched Greeta’s face turn red as the king’s had just a while ago.

“Who do you thi—”

“I’m the king,” growled Dagon as he stood up, towering over the shorter dwarf. “Now sit down and shut up, or I’ll have my guards remove you from here.”

A snicker came from their healer, and Max could sense a grin on Tanila’s face.

I’m beginning to like him. That mother, though… Perhaps it is a good thing that she isn’t married to Tanila’s father. Imagine the life that would bring.

Unable to hold back any longer, Max started to chuckle and then laughed louder.

Everyone turned to see him holding a side and shaking his head.

“Is something funny?” Fowl asked.

“Yes! What happened to all the stuff I hear about dwarves and how family is everything? I mean… the king tried to bully you and Batrire into joining his Guard and leaving us, no offense, sir.”

A single hand wave was all Dagon gave.

“Now your mother couldn’t see the truth even when the very dwarf she claims could prove your value has already told her how great you are. I’m not certain she would even admit you were worthy of her love or anything else if Ockrim himself came and told her you were.”

“Bah! Who do you think you are?!”

Fowl’s mother gave him a gaze that might have turned him to stone had she possessed those powers.

“I’m Max Hoste. I’m the guy who entrusts his life to those two,” he replied, eyes locked on the woman who had called him out. “Don’t mind me, as I already know we’re going to defeat the tower, and soon your son will be one of the greatest dwarves in your people’s entire history on this world.”

“Bah, he’ll die like the rest of you fools! Not even—”

Max held out a token between his fingers, and every dwarf in the room turned toward it as one. Like a magnet and metal, none of them could take their eyes off of it.

“Greeta Hammerfall. I’ve met Ockrim. He is very proud of your son! So before you dare anger your god by speaking bad of the one he has given many great skills and a pair of balls so large, ogres are jealous, take the stick out of your arse, and see who stands before you.”

“Where… how… you…”

Dagon’s words were broken, his mouth hanging open, unable to close, and his hand stretched out toward the token in Max’s hand.

“He and I spoke, along with Phaius. He gave me this in case I needed to prove to you that what I ask comes with his blessing. It appears it works better than I expected.”

“Do you even know what that is? Please… put it away or give it to me before I can’t stop myself.”

Max frowned but nodded, storing the token and watching every dwarf around him almost take a collective sigh and shake their head.

“It calls to me… like a siren,” Fowl muttered.

Clearing his throat, Dagon nodded, taking a second before his voice seemed to work.

“Please… keep that hidden, but now I see that things are well beyond what I had expected or even imagined.”

Rising to his feet, the King of the Dwarves moved to where Max was and held out his hand.

“I pledge to help you and your team as much as possible within reason to accomplish the task Ockrim has given. That token… will you sell it?”

Frowning, Max shook his head.

“I still have need for it. Perhaps down the road I might be willing, but there is another dwarf on another world I will have to show this to.”

“Another world?” Grondir asked, almost falling out of his chair as the younger dwarf leaned forward. “Has… has Fowl been to a different one?”

Shaking his head again, Max winced.

“Not yet, but soon. Still, there is a lot I think we need to discuss, perhaps in private, and we could probably use another round of drinks.”

Dagon nodded and snapped his fingers.

“Everyone out. Including you three,” the king said as he pointed at the Hammerfalls. “We’ll have a discussion later, and you can decide how grown up some of you want to be.”

“Forgive us,” Fowl’s father said quietly.

“Do not ask for my forgiveness. Perhaps instead, you should ask your son for his.”

Turning, the leader of the dwarves moved to where the cask of ale was, leaving the group in an awkward moment.

“Uh… sorry, son.”

Fowl took a few quick breaths and stood, inching slightly toward the man he called dad.

“It’s okay. I’ve just missed you.”

The man moved quickly, and in a moment both men were hugging, a few sobs coming from the pair.

Grondir didn’t wait more than ten seconds before he joined the duo and was enveloped in their arms.

After a minute, the three turned to look at Greeta, who was frowning, sitting in her chair and glaring at them.

“Gods, woman, Ockrim himself! Get off your fat arse, and give this boy a hug, or so help me I will not allow you to forge another weapon in our shop!”

“You wouldn’t,” she gasped, eyes going wide.

“Our king is right… I have let you control my manhood for too long… It was your words that made me issue that decision against our son. I never wanted him to leave but also knew he didn’t love the forge. For a year we have lived without him, and every day it left an ache in my heart.”

Orstein turned and rubbed his hand on Fowl’s head.

“Our son is home, Greeta! He is a tower climber, blessed by our god and wanted by our king! What more could you want?!”

She huffed and didn’t move, lips clenched tight.

“It’s okay, Dad,” Fowl said after a moment. “Knowing you will acknowledge me is more than you can believe.”

Grunting, his father turned and nodded.

“Give me time. Perhaps she is like a piece of cracked ore and needs a far longer time than all the rest to be made into something that is usable.”

Chuckling, the trio of Hammerfall men all ignored the glare that was given to them by Greeta.

A throat cleared, and everyone turned to see Dagon returning with two fists full of tankards.

“Now that at least some of the mood has changed, I need for you all to leave. It appears that I must have a moment of privacy with these five and see what it is I can do to assist in their serving of our god.”

***

Max watched as Dagon stroked his beard with his left hand.

“Never would I have even considered allowing someone other than dwarves to enter the tower past the 50th floor, but I cannot argue with what you hold. Still… do you realize the predicament you put me in?”

“Worried about setting a precedent?”

Frowning, the king nodded.

“Part of me wonders if perhaps I am wrong for doing so. Many adventurers come here for the tower, but we all know that there are fewer humans and elves here than in Peltagow. I know many won’t ever attempt to reach the 50th floor, yet I could do more to make it attractive to humans and maybe a few more elves to come.”

“I’m not trying to be ugly, but my own people don’t seem to want to come here, and I don’t think it’s your fault,” Cordellia stated.

Nodding, the king grinned.

“Still… I can do more. As such I will inform my people that you five are allowed in any part of the tower you desire. Now then, tell me the news about the wedding you two are planning.”

Max was grinning, and yet before he could say thank you, Batrire was on her feet and headed toward Dagon.

“I have a list, and these are the things I was planning on doing, but if you think you might be able to help with them…”

“Oh, he’s in trouble,” Tanila whispered as they watched Dagon’s eyes widen as their healer put sheet after sheet of paper before the king’s eyes, each one with details on the perfect wedding.

“Uh… a parade of goats? Pulling the wedding party?”

“YES!” Batrire exclaimed, doing a twirl, clutching her papers close. “Can you see it?! It’s just like the story of Gruomda and her wedding!”

A groan came from Fowl, who winced, mouthing *I’m sorry* at the king, who gave him a pained smile back.

“This is a lot of flowers,” Dagon stated as he cleared his throat. “I mean… are you certain you would need—”

Batrire gave him a look that would have caused any dwarven father to sell his weapon to buy their daughter a present they wanted. Two big brown eyes seemed to shake as her bottom lip came out, pressed into the perfect pouting position.

“But… surely Ockrim wants me to have the wedding that will showcase those he has chosen.”

Tanila snickered, and their healer ignored her, eyes locked on the one who had the power to make all this happen.

“I… I’m not saying I can do all this but…” With a sigh, he hung his head in defeat. “Who am I to say no to a woman I tried to force from her family? Very well, I’ll give these things to my advisors. How long do we have till this wedding takes place?”

A loud *whoop* came from their healer as she rushed forward, obviously forgetting who she gave a quick hug, turning beet red after pulling back from the embrace.

“Uh… forgive me. A month?”

“A month is good,” Dagon said as he adjusted his tunic she had just crushed. “Anything else?”

“I have one last request,” Max said as he scooted forward in his chair

“So much for my special status,” Fowl mumbled.

66 Chapter 395 - Making Them Fight

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-6/chapter/2132141/chapter-395-making-them-fight;[2025-03-17 15:02]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Saved wilber

Chapter 395 - Making Them Fight

“I can’t believe we made it out of there alive,” Tanila stated as they left the castle in the carriage Dagon had picked out for them. “I mean, he’s paying for a wedding fit for a royal family member. Not only that but he is allowing us to go past the 50th floor in the tower and going to let you have access to his forge.”

“How is that barely making it out of there alive?” Max asked.

“Just earlier, I was almost certain we were about to fight the king and his guards. Had that happened…”

Her voice trailed off, and her face started to pucker up like she was sucking on a lemon.

“Yeah… that was a bit tense,” Fowl said. “Still, I’m grateful to each of you for standing with us there. Who knew he was going to do that?”

“We should have known,” Batrire replied. “I should have known… I could sense something was wrong when we were told he would be meeting us. No dwarf ever gets that kind of treatment without the king getting what he wants.”

“Yet he didn’t. Ockrim must love us for things to play out like they did.”

Max smiled at his friend, who never lost his faith in the dwarven god.

“So what’s the plan?” Cordellia asked. “We got a month till a wedding, a tower that needs climbing, and permission to go above and beyond the 50th floor. Are we ready for this?”

“I say we go for it first thing in the morning,” Batrire proclaimed. “I’m ready to get stronger and prove to everyone we can do what we said we can.”

***

“Good luck today, and be safe.”

Max nodded at Fudumod as he waved.

The dwarf had informed them a week ago they were free to attempt any floor but to just let him know when they were going to attempt the harder ones.

Today they had decided it would be the first day.

“Hopefully we’ll see you soon,” Fowl said, getting a staff to the back.

“Don’t talk like that!” Batrire exclaimed. “Gods, not even in the tower and already sounding like things are going to go wrong.”

Ignoring the bantering pair, Max touched the shimmering portal and selected the 51st floor.

His eyes began to work, and the gentle breeze he felt blowing against his skin was pleasant. The scent he had smelled and the sounds of the waves had informed him beforehand what was in store.

“Bah, a water floor? Really?”

Fowl’s complaint came as the others appeared next to him.

“Ug… I just got my beard waxed,” Batrire muttered.

“We’re not quitting,” Cordellia stated. “We’ve waited so long to attempt this again. Besides, I’m not sure about the rest of you, but I’m really ready for some real experience.”

And I need more power. It has been far too long.

“Alright,” Max called out, his weapon and shield in hand. “I’ll scout. Let’s see what we got and go from there.”

Everyone got ready as Batrire cast her buff.

Before them was a large ocean, gentle waves crashing against the white sand over and over.

“Looks like it’s going to be underwater,” Fowl said as Max prepared to head into the crystal-blue water. “You think we’ll see more mermaids or mermen or whatever?”

Shrugging, all he could do was smile and tap his boot with the butt of his weapon.

“Only one way to find out.”

***

“Hurry up and kill it!” Max shouted.

“I’m trying!” Cordellia yelled at him, arrows moving through water only because of the magical nature of her bow.

Dozens of fish all larger than Max, each with a mouth full of sharp jagged teeth, were floating upside down, blood discoloring the water as three more came at the party.

Max was near the group as Fowl tried to get between the fish and the team.

Thin ice and stone spears sped through the water, impaling the fish as they approached.

Each attack was effective, especially considering the underwater environment they were in, yet none were strong enough to one-shot these fish.

Still, Max didn’t do anything unless he had to, watching the team fight off the fish he pulled to them.

You are making them work for this.

We both know that they couldn’t do this floor on their own, and I’m not sure even with Dexic they could complete this. Look at how many hits it takes for each of them.

Of course your boots kind of make this a bit of a joke.

Smiling to himself, Max knew Bob was right. Each of his attacks were like normal, and he could move through the water in any direction as if he was on land.

“Taunting!”

Fowl’s skill activated, and the trio of fish that were going to swim past him turned and chomped onto the metal-clad warrior.

More blood filled the water as they injured themselves, holes from the arrows and spears adding to the bloody mess.

“A little help?”

“No. You need to do this,” Max replied, ignoring the grunt from their archer in response to her question.

When all three were dead, and they collected the gems that had dropped, Max watched the four, who all still seemed a bit frustrated.

“Don’t get me wrong, I understand why you’re making us do this,” Tanila said, “but it is taking forever without you doing as much as usual.”

“Which is the problem,” Max replied. “You all need to be able to do things without me. Not that I plan on suddenly vanishing again, but if you want to be the

adventurers we claim to be, I can't just run us through every tower floor and not make sure you are all ready for what comes next."

"He's right," Fowl muttered. "This wasn't fun, but we survived. I mean… it hurt but not as bad as I was afraid it might. And both of you have really improved on your abilities and skills in the water."

Hearing their warriors praise them, the duo who had done most of the work seemed to relax slightly.

"Gods, I hate it when I can't tell if he put points in intelligence," Batrire teased.

Rolling his eyes, Fowl turned to look in the direction Max had been taking them.

"How many more?"

"Let's get three or four more packs, and after that I can do the rest. Still, you've improved. A lot."

"Only because I had to. Thank you for helping me remember that."

Giving his friend a gentle shove sent him moving through the water.

"Bah, stop that," Fowl grunted. "It's almost as bad as being on ice."

***

"I'm impressed," Fudumod said. "You managed to defeat the 51st floor in a single day? Should I ask how bad it was?"

"Only if you want me to put some sand down your pants," Cordellia replied with a scowl. "Gods I hate water floors."

The dwarf winced and shook his head.

"No, I think I'll pass. I don't need help chafing. Still… it's an impressive feat to say the least. Finishing any floor that fast, let alone this one, isn't something any could really hope for. How much stronger were they?"

Max motioned to Fowl and the others, not having an answer that would be worth giving.

"It's hard to say," their mage replied. "Being in water makes all the spells and attacks harder to do as much damage. Add to the extra armor and damage they seem to do, it creates a few other problems. For… another group, they might find this one worth passing on."

Chuckling, Fudumod nodded. "You say that as if it's not an insult to other groups, and yet I know you don't mean it that way."

"She's right," Max said. "Those things were dangerous, and in a pack it could get out of hand fast. They would swarm a mage, healer, and ranger quickly. Without heavy armor to handle their bites, one would be chomped to bits quickly."

“I see… Well, thank you for that information. There will be many who will be grateful for that advice.”

Turning back to his book, Fudumod seemed to suddenly not care that they were standing close to him.

“I guess we can go home and get a shower?” Cordellia asked.

“Yes please… all of us smell like fish,” Batrire replied. “Fowl especially.”

***

It took eight days to grind out the experience in the twenties for all of them to achieve the third 2.5% permanent bonus on top of the levels.

Max shook his head as he watched Tanila crush the last red gem. She sighed as the red aura of magic washed over her fingers and into her body.

“What’s wrong?”

Forcing a smile, he shrugged.

“Nothing, just admiring how beautiful you look.”

A groan came from Fowl, who tossed a pair of ogre testicles in his bag.

“Oh yeah, she looks amazing, standing there, getting all the attention while I’m over here, knee deep in this mess harvesting these things for Erwini.”

“But you’re the closest one to their midsection,” Batrire replied with a grin. “I mean… besides, you also have the most practice out of all of us.”

Giving the woman he was engaged to the middle finger, he trudged over to the last one and began working on retrieving its privates.

“Red ogres… that seems so weird,” Cordellia stated with a tsk of her tongue. “I mean… I’ve heard of them but never seen them. The tower sure is strange in how it gives different things to different people.”

“I’m just glad we’ve seen other groups,” Tanila said as she moved to where Max was. “It’s nice knowing there are other groups facing similar things.”

“Makes the grinding a little bit slower,” their ranger replied. “Still, you’re right. For a while the tower seemed so barren and empty when we were in Peltagow.”

I can sense what you’re thinking. Do you think she is changing?

How you do that scares me sometimes… still I’m not sure. Have you noticed how much she has changed each time the power for the level fills up? Is it just me, or am I wrong?

Based on what I can recall from your memories, she has acted more… excited each time. Of course the others have been a little more excited as well. Perhaps it isn’t just her, and you’re overly focused on how she is doing.

Regardless, you need to focus on tomorrow. We'll be taking on the next floor in the dungeon, and you need to see how your team does against stronger opponents. We both know that the 51st floor played against their strengths. If you find another floor like that, it might be worth just doing all the work to prevent any potential unnecessary risks.

That's what I like about you, Bob… you seem to actually care for my friends.'

A weird sensation like a chill went through him, and no reply came.

"Max?"

Tanila's voice made him shake his head, seeing her looking at him with a perplexed look.

"Sorry… talking with Bob."

"Ahh. Anything we need to know?"

"Just that tomorrow is a big day, and we need to be ready. He feels if the floor is another one like yesterday I might be better off doing all the hard work and us not taking risks since it plays against our weaknesses."

"But wouldn't that prevent us from getting better at fighting when we are weak?"

Max gave Fowl a side-eye glance and shook his head.

"That is probably one of the smartest things you've said all day."

"Bah, you know where you can shove it," their warrior exclaimed. "I'm just saying, while I didn't enjoy the water floor, it was good to see how we handled it without you. Sure, we couldn't have done it, but it gave us real practice in a situation where I never worried about their lives because you were there."

"Almost like we were training with Tom," Cordellia added.

Groaning, Max glared at their ranger.

"Please don't say I'm like Tom… I'm nothing like him."

"Bah, get over yerself," Fowl muttered. "Both of you want to help us get better, and each of you makes it painful when we have to learn new things."

Tanila was chuckling, and Max saw the grin that even Batrire was hiding.

"Forget it. Let's finish this floor and then head to the Faction. I've got a date with a forge."

"The other love of his life," Tanila muttered. "If only he wanted to…" She stopped talking, and her face turned red.

"I can finish that statement if you want," their warrior teased.

"Fowl Hammerfall! Don't you dare!" Batrire shouted.

Thankful that everyone was distracted for a moment, Max tried to understand the feeling he felt inside.

67 Chapter 396 - What You’re Willing to Trade

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-7-stubs-march-25th/chapter/2134537/chapter-397-the-kings-forge;[word2025-03-19 12:24,publish2025-03-18 14:02]

Chapter 396 - What You’re Willing to Trade

You’re quiet… even for you. What is wrong?

His hammer pounded the metal and shaped it as he knew it needed to be, glad to see the image in his head start to come to life.

Erwini had procured a lot of different materials for him to work with, each weapon an epic quality one, designed to help the members as they climbed the tower.

Why won’t you reply?

After what felt like an eternity or at least two hammers having been halfway completed, Bob finally spoke.

I didn’t know how to process the question you asked earlier. For me… I’ve always been focused on myself and you. Part of me resented in the past your friends and now family because they prevented me from being able to have you give into the hunger.

Love was always something I feared… the power of it is impossible to control, and when it is skewed or one is hurt by those they love, it causes damage that can undo everything or turn someone into a raging monster.

Max stored the hammerhead he was working on and stood there, focused on the conversation taking place with his skill.

There is great power and danger in the concept of love. I would kill for those I love. You know that. Even when I couldn’t bring myself to dish out punishment, anytime they were in danger I never hesitated in that moment to end the life of any threat.

But it is also that love that kept me grounded, knowing if I went too far, that I wouldn’t be the person they loved.

Yes… and when we were on Igarra’s world, I knew that the love and commitment to Tanila and your friends was the only thing that kept you from turning into the very thing I had at one time hoped for. No matter how much a part of me really wanted you to give in there, there was a part that knew I couldn’t let you… a part that… cared about the others.

Bob went silent again for a few moments.

Is that a bad thing?

No… but it scares me. My first thought is always to you because we are tied together. What happens if something takes place and we have to choose between ourselves and them?

We choose them. No questions asked.

But if we do that and die, perhaps more suffer and are lost because we couldn't choose the best path, which means sacrificing one of them.

Is that what this is about? If I had to choose who to let die?

Yes… or no… or… I'm not sure. All these emotions suddenly hit when you asked me this question, and it strummed a thread that was buried deep within. An ache or pain I didn't realize I had inside me.

So what would you do if it was between Tanila and myself? Would you stop or try to stop me from saving her, even if we both knew it meant our death?

No. I know that the only outcome that would matter is saving her for you. Even now, with her carrying your child, she is far more valuable to you than anything else. It is why you seem to focus on everything she does. Yet if you had to choose between her and Batrire or her and Fowl, which would you choose?

I…

Max lost his voice, knowing that this was something he had weighed in his mind so many times before and never came up with a good answer.

I would react as best as possible, but we both know that Tanila would want me to save the other.

Even if it meant losing her and your unborn child?

Clearing his throat, Max groaned.

There is no right answer. We both know this. In that moment a decision has to be made. Someone will live, and someone will die. If I can't save both, I would rather endure the anger and pain of her being mad at me for not saving someone else than to lose her.

And what about when your child is born and you must choose between the two?

Max felt his legs weaken, and he put his hand on the stone table he was standing near.

No words came, and as he regained his strength he cursed under his breath.

I know… there is no right answer. Now you know why I am silent, because I suddenly feel the tingling of your own concern and love for your friends and

family, and I am afraid I might shift and shape your decision in who might be saved.

And if I blamed you for the decision that was made…

Yes. We would be divided again, and the odds of us surviving what is coming would most likely be impossible to overcome.

Nodding to no one, Max spat on the ground and then twirled the hammer he still held.

Suddenly I feel the need to beat some metal for a bit. Care to join me?

I think I do.

***

“You sure you’ll be okay?” Tanila asked as she waited for him to climb out of the cart. “You never came to bed.”

Nodding, Max moved to where she stood and pulled her close, kissing her on the cheek.

“I needed to work out some frustration and it turns out weaponsmithing is a way to clear one’s mind while accomplishing things that need to get done.”

“So you’re the reason Erwini was in such a good mood this morning?”

Nodding, he motioned to the entrance of the wall that led to the tower.

“Let’s catch up with the others. I’m ready for whatever the floor throws at us today.”

***

“I take it back,” Max said as he stared across the vast expanse of blackened soil, a full moon shining up above.

The smell of rotting flesh drifted across the slight breeze that blew, cold and unwelcoming.

As far as he could make out, on the tower floor were thousands of tombs, graves, and markers, all signaling where someone or something might be buried.

“What did I miss?” Fowl asked. “What are you taking back?”

“Just ran my mouth when I shouldn’t have. Still, I guess that’s what I get for being an idiot.”

“Gods, we’re in trouble if Max is an idiot,” Cordellia teased. “What happens when Fowl realizes what he is?”

Shaking his head, Max’s gaze cut off all the joking that was about to take place.

“Not today. This isn’t something we need to fool around with. My abilities we all know don’t work that great against the undead, and it appears we are about to face a whole tower floor made of something that limits just how much I can do. Right now

our choices are grind this the old fashion way, let me run around and slaughter everything I can, doing my best to not waste mana and slowly expand in a circle around you all. Or…”

“We skip the floor.”

Nodding at Tanila’s answer, Max motioned to the tower floor they were looking at.

“Opinions?”

“One day we may face a floor like this and not have the luxury of just leaving it,” Batrire replied. “I understand your concern, but surely you can overpower them all. Right?”

“Yes, but that leaves you all here alone by the portal. Are you okay with that?”

A chair appeared in Fowl’s hand, and he placed it down in the black soil between the portal and their team.

“If I need to sit here all day while you clear this floor and earn us all experience, I guess I’ll endure.”

Shaking his head, Max gave his friend a gentle tap on the shoulder.

“Always knew I could count on you to do the hard stuff.”

“Always.”

***

Hundreds of purple gems floated through the night air, following Max as he ran around the tower floor, his axe cleaving the head off every creature before they could react. None took more than a single strike, and sometimes a few were close enough together that he could behead them in one attack.

You’re doing what needs to be done.

We say that, but one moment I’m too weak for not killing someone that deserves it, and the next I’m not making my team fight a battle they might wish we had practiced against.

Why? Tanila’s fire spells would destroy most of these things with her familiar. Even Cordellia’s elemental arrows would cause major damage, and we both know she could headshot most of these undead.

With Fowl’s skills and armor he could handle the damage done while Batrire kept him alive. You wouldn’t even have to be as strong as you are, simply closer to what they were, and I have no doubt you all could defeat them.

His weapon swung again, taking down another pair as he streaked across the floor like a bolt of lighting.

True… Sorry, I’m still a bit worked up from last night.

And here I thought we had hammered it all out.

Unable to stop himself, Max started to laugh as he raced across the ground, bringing death and laughter to everything that was in his path.

***

“Are you okay? You seem different?”

Max nodded and gave Tanila a hug as he pulled her close.

“Just a conversation or two with Bob. Made me really think about how much I love you and the others.”

“We know that,” she replied, snuggling against him as they lay in bed. “You don’t have to tell us or do crazy things to show us that. None of us ever doubt how you care about us.”

“I know… still I think we should rest. Tomorrow is a big day, and I’m not sure how it’s going to go.”

“For you,” Tanila muttered. “I’m going to be here helping to train mages while you and Fowl run off to the castle, and you get to work in the dwarven forge. I mean, Cordellia and I didn’t even get an invite.”

“Did you want to come watch me make weapons all day?”

Pushing her hip back quickly, she grunted.

“Maybe… maybe not. It’s just that Dagon didn’t invite me. Surely he must know I take offense to that.”

“Perhaps he took offense for being compared to your father, regardless of how true that might have been in that moment.”

“Men… dwarves…” Tanila huffed. “Almost as bad as women.”

Using his free hand, Max carefully moved her unbraided hair that covered her neck and began to kiss it slowly.

“All men or just those who don’t appreciate you and how great you are?”

She let a small moan out and shook her head slowly.

“Sometimes I really do believe there is more to how smart you are than just how many points of intelligence you have.”

Chuckling, Max kissed her neck with a little more fervor and then laughed.

“I can stop if you want,” he said, his breath hot against her skin.

“Not if you want to sleep with me tonight.”

***

“You’re smiling more than usual. Something happened that I’m not aware of?”

Max shrugged as they rode in the carriage the king had sent for them.

“So tell me about this forge.”

“Bah, you’re changing the subject. Besides, you already know everything I told you about it. Nothing you’ve seen or worked in compares to this one. Metal, ore, material, things most crafters would only dream of are present in the forge. To be allowed in there is an honor almost as great as being chosen for the King’s Guard.”

“Which is why you wanted to come?”

Fowl nodded and looked out the window as the capital slowly passed by.

“Even though I never wanted to really be a weapon or armor smith, there was always a part of me that wanted to get a glimpse of the king’s forge. So many stories were told by my grandfather about the things that were crafted there. Things of legends from times long ago.”

“So do you think I’ll be able to find things we need there?”

Shrugging his shoulders, his friend frowned.

“Honestly, I am certain you will. The problem will be getting permission to have it for yourself.”

“Even with my token?”

The mentioning of it made Fowl perk up, his eyes scanning Max’s hand.

“Uh… yeah even with that… unless of course you want to trade it.”

Max nodded and considered that for a moment.

Thoughts? Should we trade it?

I’m not certain. The material is unique, and as you can see everyone wants it. Why I’m not sure. Perhaps it is a connection to Ockrim.

So don’t trade it unless I have to.

68 Chapter 397 - The King’s Forge

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-7-stubs-march-25th/chapter/2134537/chapter-397-the-kings-forge; [word2025-03-19 12:24,publish2025-03-18 14:02]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

'Your Choices Matter' That a is tagline spun in many games, but it's rarely true—often reaching the same end no matter what path you take. But that doesn't have to be the case. Every choice you make will permanently change the direction of Fate by Committee!

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 397 - The King’s Forge

The moment Max entered the thick metal doors that led into the actual forge, he couldn't wipe away the smile that had formed even if offered a thousand gold.

Over a hundred dwarves were working in unison, dozens of them singing a song as they pounded metal.

Down we go, where shadows creep,
Through stone halls cold and secrets deep.
With pick and axe, we carve our way,
For gold and glory, we'll not delay.

Strike the iron, strong and true,
The mountain's gift, it's ours to hew.
Forge the blade, the axe, the shield,
To battle's call, we'll never yield.

Hammer falls, the anvil rings,
Echo loud as the mountains sing.
Fire and stone, our hearts the same,
We craft with pride in the hammer's flame.

"First time hearing dwarves sing like this?"

Max nodded at Fowl, feeling the deep tone of all the dwarves as they created a melody that matched the cadence of their strikes of their hammers.

"It's… amazing. I'm at a loss for words."

The pair of guards who were escorting them had stopped, and Max noticed both of them were humming in tune with the song, neither lifting their voices as they waited on them to follow.

"Does your family do this?"

"We used to," his friend replied with a frown. "My mother… she… can be a difficult dwarf. I remember when she decided it would be better to limit how often we sang. There were still times that we did, but often it was reserved for holidays or special occasions."

Sensing how his friend was fidgeting and the topic of Greeta was beginning to ruin the mood, Max gave Fowl a side hug and shook him a little.

"Well, you'll have to teach me some of them one day. That way when I visit the dozen children all named after me, we can sing together."

Laughing, the dwarf shook his head and shoved Max.

"Yeah… I've heard you sing… let's not torture the children."

Both men followed the pair as they led them to a large forge, where a blond-haired dwarf was singing, her voice rising above the deep tone of the men, adding the perfect pitch to harmonize with the others.

“Master Ruznula!” one of their escorts shouted. “The men our king said would be joining you today!”

A slight frown appeared on the woman’s face, her blue eyes gazing upon both of them.

“He really wasn’t joking… a human… in our forge?”

“King Dagon was not, ma’am.”

Snorting, she nodded and waved the pair away, moving from where she had been watching two men who were pounding out on a metal Max knew would make rare weapons.

“You must be Fowl Hammerfall. I can see the resemblance of your father and brother,” Ruznula said, coming to stand before them, wiping her hands on her leather apron. “And… Max Hoste… the human I’m supposed to let into the very hall Ockrim built for us to craft in.”

“Pleasure to meet you, Master Ruznula,” Fowl said with a deep bow. “It’s an honor to see this place in person.”

She huffed, her eyes staying fixed on Max.

“Thank you for honoring the king’s request.”

Shaking her head, she licked her fingers and then fixed her bushy eyebrows.

“Like I could deny the king’s *request* , no matter what I think. So, can he really craft?”

Max ignored the fact that she had yet to reply to him and watched his friend shift a little under her gaze.

“He can. In fact… he made this.”

“Fowl, don’t!”

Shaking his head, his dwarven friend held up his left hand as he held the legendary weapon Max had created for him.

Ruznula glanced between the pair, her eyes narrowing at them both before studying the hammer held out before her.

“Well at least it looks like something of—”

A cough came and she moved forward, reaching out to grab it as her eyes started to see the runes and markings on it along with the materials that it had been crafted from.

Pulling his weapon back, Fowl held out his hand and stopped the charging weaponsmith.

“No. This isn’t something anyone gets to inspect except me and him.”

“But those runes! Those marks! How can…”

Her words seemed to catch in her throat as she fought to look back and forth between the hammer, the warrior she knew was further in the tower than most dwarves could ever dream of, and the human she had a problem with being in this very room.

“Hit him.”

“What?”

“Hit him with it,” Ruznula said. “As hard as you can.”

“It’s okay,” Max said with a chuckle. “She wants to make sure that I actually made it.”

“Oh… that’s right. For a moment I was wondering if she had been sniffing the fumes too long.”

A chuckle came from the pair of dwarves that had been working on weapons, both having paused and watched the event unfold before them.

Max turned to face his friend and clasped his hands behind his back.

“Take your best shot.”

Laughing, Fowl nodded and backed up a few steps, spinning the handle in his hand for a moment, a devilish grin appearing.

“Gods, I hate that this isn’t going to do anything, but I’m going to give everything I have.”

Nodding, Max bobbed his head, and Fowl charged two steps, planted his feet, and swung with every ounce of power he had.

The hammer connected against Max’s unarmored chest, the flat head coming to a complete stop and making Fowl stumble as the power of the attack just vanished.

“Dear Ockrim…”

Other gasps could be heard as Max noticed the song had ended, every dwarf staring at them as Fowl stood upright and twirled the hammer a few times before storing it.

“Now, as I was saying, Master Ruznula, my friend and half-brother is able to craft many wonderful weapons. Perhaps you can pull the donkey out of your arse and trust that King Dagon knows what he wants.”

The blond beard on the woman performed a melody of dance movements, moving all over her face as her jaw worked and no sound came forth for a few.

“I… I… Forgive me, Sir Hoste.”

“Just Max,” he replied with a wave of his hand. “You’re not the first to doubt my ability, and I understand how special this place is to you and your people. My friend has sung the praises of how great a gift this is for you all. Even as a human, I can say that Ockrim is a great god, and truly loves his people.”

Slowly the woman’s head moved up and down, and then she grinned, stepping forward and slapping Max on the arm, her smile growing when he didn’t move at all from her blow.

Her arms are like small tree trunks.

And she’s as tall as you.

“Well, forgive me for being a fool. I guess I will have to make this up to you somehow. Can I ask what level you can craft?”

“Will you tell me yours if I tell you mine?”

Shaking her head, Ruznula winked at him.

“Not on your life, but I think we can do this the old-fashioned way. The way dwarves do this.”

***

Sweat poured down his face, and Max used the back of his hand to wipe away the perspiration.

“Speed up the air flow.”

Fowl grunted, a sheen of sweat pouring down his face as well. He was smiling, though, as his brother Grondir worked beside him.

The heat overcame neither, but as they worked together, each of them was focused on the task of crafting a few weapons; the sheen of working with metal appeared anyways.

Ruznula was about ten yards away, hammering again on another blade, having easily kept pace with Max as he worked through the uncommon, rare, and epic quality weapons. Now both of them were moving on to materials that would allow for the creation of something legendary.

All the other dwarves had stopped working, the sound of only two hammers and the bellows each weaponsmith had working their coals rising above the murmurs and discussions from those present. Hours had passed, and most only left to relieve themself, not passing up the opportunity to witness a rare thing, according to Fowl.

Adjusting the blade of the dagger he was heating, Max poured a little fire magic into it.

Some might say that is cheating.

Would you?

Laughter came from Bob.

Oh, I have no problem with it. Still, I find the deck stacked against you. She moves with such a better grace and pace. While this isn’t a race, we both know she has a lifetime of crafting to draw upon.

Which is why we're going to cheat even more.

As the blade reached the glow that he needed it to be, he transferred it to the table and began to carve runes and lines in it.

"Is he—"

"Why would he do that?"

Smiling to himself, Max knew what they were all wondering. There was no need to carve these things into a blade if one wasn't going to imbue it with an elemental core. Decorations were nice, but the true power of a blade wasn't just the magic one put in it. The metal used, the quality of the crafting, how it was shaped and tempered. All those things were just as important as what he was about to do.

He could sense Ruznula's hammer pause, the rare break in her steady rhythm as she turned and looked at him.

"Are you really going to play that game? I'm not opening the vault for you to fail on something."

"Don't worry about what you think will happen," Max said as he looked up for just a moment at her. "I've got my own materials."

She snorted, and her hammer began to sing the same song again, each strike hitting as she hummed a song.

Let's go for broke.

That is what I love about you, Max. Always willing to go big.

***

Every eye was on him and the blade he was still working on. Four more hours had passed, and Ruznula paused her own crafting, having finished the dagger she had infused with an elemental core as he had.

"Why risk it?"

"What's the point of this whole thing if I can't go for broke?" Max asked, never taking his eyes off what he was doing. "Everyone knows you have the godly tier of crafting. I can see it. You toyed with me. All that you need are the right materials, none of which you have."

A chuckle came from Ruznula as she stood closer than the other dwarves, each of them almost climbing on top of each other.

Taking a deep breath, Max blocked out the throng, well aware of what he was attempting.

I'm an idiot but I'm grateful for the help.

We both know you're a fool, but at least your heart is in the right place. Now focus on this.

Bob handled the flow of magic and mana, no longer requiring Max to try to manage doing both things at once. With his concentration able to be completely focused upon the task at hand, the lightning core he held in the glove he wore, arced with each trace of the runes.

Slower… good… we’re close.

A large arc leaped between the blade and core, causing a gasp from all those nearby, yet Max didn’t flinch, knowing he was close.

Yes… right there. Now, feel what I’m going to do. It’s going to want to push away. The amount of power contained in this small blade is at its limit. Do not allow it to stray from the blade. Even the smallest gap will cause this to fail.

Not even risking a grunt and unable to remember how long it had been since he had taken a deep breath, Max felt the rush of lightning, fire, ice, and earth magic pour from him into the dagger. All twelve inches of the blade glowed, and it was like a wild beast, fighting against the core in his hand, and the vise which held it fast.

Grateful for every ounce of strength he owned, Max fought against the raging torrent of magical power, holding the core exactly where it needed to be.

With one last movement up the blade, the core pulsed, and a flash of light went off, causing a blinding display of power, requiring everyone to shield their eyes.

As the spots faded from his vision, Max grinned, seeing the notification.

[50 Experience Gained]

[New Weapon Skill Unlocked]

[Elemental Mastery Weapon Crafting Gained]

[Determining Skill Rank]

[Elemental Mastery Weapon Crafting Skill - Legendary]

Holy—

Elf tits!

//Links

//[2025-03-19 12:24]

[L1] https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/58726/fiends-for-hire

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69 Chapter 398 - A Bond Formed in Blood https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-7-stubs-march-25th/chapter/2136613/chapter-398-a-bond-formed-in-blood;[word2025-03-19 14:06],[publish2025-03-19 14:02]

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[shoutout_link L1]

Chapter 398 - A Bond Formed in Blood

[Inspect Weapon]

*****

Legendary Elemental Dagger

+ 100 STR/DEX/CON

Elemental Mastery Affinity - Each attack does elemental damage. The blade will sense any weakness an opponent may have to a particular element and maximize damage output by automatically using that affinity.

*****

“It… worked. Max, you did it!”

Fowl’s hand slapped his shoulder as he wiped the blade down one last time, having seen the notification upon completing the weapon.

In his hand was a simple blade that gave off an almost rainbow hue as the light struck it. A bone handle from one of the creatures from Igarra’s world had been used, ignoring the options that Ruznula had provided.

“Does… Can I see it?”

Looking up from the blade, Max nodded and handed it to his friend.

“Just promise to not drop it like last time.”

A chuckle came, and Fowl pretended to act like he was going to, causing Max to grin.

“I’m kidding.”

Steady hands were outstretched, and he watched, waiting to see how Fowl would react upon inspecting the weapon.

“Dear Ockrim… Max… this…”

“Is a gift for the king,” he replied. “Ruznula. Do you think you could make it so that we could present this to him?”

Blinking rapidly a few times, the dwarf looked up from the blade Fowl was turning over, and at Max.

“You… you managed to imbue four elemental cores… I… I can’t do that… I mean, I could try, but the chances are so low that…”

“Go big or go home, right?”

She snorted and scratched her neck for a moment.

After a few seconds, her head began to bob, and she glanced up at the windows.

“Damn, we burnt the sun away! You lot! Go to bed and get some rest! Tomorrow we’ll see what the king thinks about his new gift!”

A roar came from the crowd, all of them eyeing the dagger as they cheered.

“Oh, how they wish they knew the stats,” Fowl told Max as he handed the weapon back. “Are you going to let her see it?”

“What do you think?”

Grinning, his friend shook his head.

“Not until tomorrow when you actually get to give it to Dagon. Best to make her suffer a little bit.”

***

The room where they had met the king for the first time was packed with a large number of the dwarves that had been present the day before at the forge, each of them dressed in matching outfits, all black and red with a symbol of a gold hammer on the left chest of their shirt. Most had their beards in a tight braid, easier to keep it safe from the fires of the forge.

Max could see Fowl’s brother and father both smiling, each of the dwarves almost bouncing on their toes as they watched with the rest what was taking place.

The three women were all off to the side with some nobles and older dwarven families.

“Seems like we’re the star of the show,” Max whispered to Fowl as they walked along the carpet toward the king. “Try to behave.”

“Bah, don’t make me laugh. This is big, and you know it.”

He nodded slightly, feeling every eye upon him as they moved to where Ruznula waited at the end of the carpet. Her outfit was a finer cut than the rest and had gold flames that ran up her red sleeves.

Behind her Dagon waited, the tiniest smile visible even from across the room.

After reaching the place where the Master Weaponsmith for the kingdom waited, they stopped and bowed.

“My king. Fowl Hammerfall and Max Hoste have come to offer a gift of a weapon they worked together to forge. Both of them, along with Grondir Hammerfall, put in long hours to create something I myself can only imagine will be a treasure that you will always cherish.”

A white eyebrow rose slightly as Dagon’s eyes flitted between Ruznula and them.

“You haven’t inspected it yet?”

“No, my king. They wanted to wait for this moment, as neither felt it should be revealed unless you deem it worthy of sharing.”

“And yet you called for this without ever putting your hands on it?”

The slightest murmurs came from the side Tanila, Batrire, and Cordellia were standing on.

“I did, my king. While I am certain my skill is higher than the one that was used to craft this blade yesterday, what I witnessed has left me no doubt it will be worth the reveal.”

“Then let me see this weapon.”

Ruznula turned and held out her hand, and Fowl produced the blade and handed it to her.

Max watched as the woman’s blue eyes shook.

Somehow, she was able to still her hand as she inspected it for a moment before letting out a tiny snort.

“As I expected. This is beyond what I had imagined.”

Leaning forward, Dagon held out his hand as she approached, holding the handle toward him.

Upon taking it from her, he spent a few seconds, looking over it, running his thumb along the runes that had been carved.

And then his black eyes almost seemed to glow, and he began to laugh.

“By Ockrim’s beard! There are few blades that I have seen with the power of this one!”

A roar of applause and cheer came from the weaponsmiths, and Max could feel Fowl puffing out his chest.

Dagon motioned with both hands for more applause as he stood and descended the steps, coming to stand before them.

“You are giving this to me? I was informed you used your own materials, and I know those are not cheap, even for a tower climber.”

“A gift for your assistance in our friend’s wedding. We both know we’re probably getting the better end of this deal.”

Roaring with laughter, Dagon clamped a hand on Fowl's shoulder and motioned to Max with his head.

"You are right. He is your half-brother. Take good care of each other. Perhaps one day he will manage to grow some hair on that bald head of his."

Both men chuckled, and as the king held the weapon upward, looking so small in his large hands, the leader of the dwarves cleared his throat.

"Today we celebrate a rare moment. I have been reminded about what makes us different from some of the other races. We are a family. Blood is important, but even more than that, it is the ties of friendship and kinship."

He gazed out over the crowd and locked eyes with the only other two Hammerfalls in the crowd.

"There are rare things we do in our kingdom. Dwarves have made these kinds of commitments in times past, and they carry a promise that is stronger than birth.

Max felt Fowl shifting and heard some gasps as Dagon suddenly had a cord of rope in his other hand.

"We are slow to change because we live so long, but I remember stories from my great great grandfather telling me of a time when bonds between other races were so strong, they were like brothers. So in honor of the gift that has been given to me today, I will offer a gift that most will never imagine possible."

Both black eyes fell upon Fowl.

"Fowl Hammerfall. Are you willing to bleed and die for the man beside you? To defend him and his family as if they are your own?"

"I have and do, my king."

Nodding, Dagon turned to Max and smiled.

"Max Hoste. In our kingdom sometimes dwarves are so close that they are considered brothers, even though they are not. Sometimes that bond goes so deep they form a pact and unite their families, creating a new clan in the process many times. Your friend and half-brother has offered you the chance to become his full brother. Would you do the same? Would you be willing to bleed and die for the dwarf beside you? To defend him and his family as if they are his own?"

Blinking, he felt a few tears had formed and started to run down his face, having already figured out what was happening.

"I have and I will. My king."

Nodding, Dagon motioned to Fowl, who held out his right hand.

Twirling the knife in his hand, the king grinned.

"Perhaps I shouldn't test out its ability."

All three of them chuckled as he stored it and replaced it with a different knife. With a quick slice, he cut Fowl's palm.

Max held out his hand, and then Dagon did the same, frowning when the blade didn't cut his skin.

"Ahh… yeah… sorry. You'll need something a bit higher quality."

"He's always showing off," Fowl grunted.

"Interesting. You are full of surprises."

A different dagger replaced the one he held, and this time the skin on Max's flesh was split, causing blood to flow freely.

"Clasp hands."

After they did as instructed, Dagon began to wind the rope he had around their wrist and hand.

"Rope is so common, but people often forget its importance in life until they need it. This is like a family. We take them for granted and only remember how vital they are for in those moments we truly need them. May you two never forget or take for granted each other."

Snapping his finger, Dagon motioned to Fowl's father.

"Orstein Hammerfall. Now is the time to decide. Would you like to come and welcome your newest son or abandon both of them?"

Every eye turned, and there was barely a second before the older dwarf began moving to where the pair stood. Before he reached them, Orstein bowed low.

"I come to greet both of my sons. Thank you for helping me see what I was blind to see."

A single nod was all the king gave as Fowl's father moved and hugged both of them at the same time.

Cheers came, and soon Max sensed Fowl's brother joining the hug. Only a few seconds later, Batrire, Tanila, and Cordellia all joined in on the mass collective, each of them grunting and squeezing the pair.

"I guess you really are a dwarf now," Fowl called out from the middle.

"Just don't ask me to wax my beard," Max replied, earning a roar of laughter from all who heard.

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A groan came from Tanila as she rolled over in the bed.

"How long are you going to be gone?"

“Just a few hours. It’s been weeks, and I can feel a tug suddenly on me from Rakonath,” Max replied. “It’s weird. The last few hours it’s grown, and I think we’ve been apart too long.”

“But it hasn’t been any longer than usual. What could be different?”

Frowning, Max shrugged. “That’s what bothers me.”

Moving to the bed, he gave her a quick kiss and set down a few muffins on the nightstand.

“I’ll be back before you know it. Besides, we both know today we’re not going to do anything. After all that drinking, I’m not sure Fowl or Batrire could do anything either. Regardless of whether she healed herself or him.”

Chuckling, she nodded.

“Fine, but don’t be gone all day.”

With a smile, he waved and was gone, the portal taking him to Aerthen’s cave.

As soon as he appeared, he could feel pain in his chest.

Lying on the ground of the cave was both Rakonath and the giant red dragon.

“What’s wrong?”

His eyes searched for the silver dragon, which was coiled up against the one who had promised to watch over him.

She’s hurt. Another dragon came and tried to take her and me.

Max looked at the scars that covered the beast. Large chunks of flesh were slowly knitting themselves together, but over a hundred scales had to be missing from what he could see.

Slowly, she raised her wing, and he saw the torn membranes.

“Who… who did this?”

“A rival… one who rarely comes here but appears to have sensed Rakonath.”

Her voice sounded weak, and Max’s Sonar revealed just how bad things were.

Why isn’t she healing?

I do not know. She is a dragon, ask her.

Frustrated at Bob not knowing the answer and the fact he asked a question that was so apparent, Max put a hand on Aerthen’s snout.

“What can I do? Why aren’t you healing?”

“My core… it’s gone.”

//Links

//[2025-03-19 14:06]

[L1] https://a.co/d/47SdLGW

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70 Chapter 399 - The Ultimate Sacrifice https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-7-stubs-march-25th/chapter/2138870/chapter-399-the-ultimate-sacrifice;[word2025-03-20 14:02],[publish2025-03-20 14:02]

Chapter 399 - The Ultimate Sacrifice

“It’s my fault,” Rakonath said, receiving a growl from the red dragon after his statement.

“No… it is not. It is mine. You obeyed me, and it was my decision to be out.”

“Still—”

“Forget the blame,” Max exclaimed. “Why is your core gone?”

“I’ve used it to fight and make it back here. Our fight was not one most could hope to make it back from. Every trick I know was used, and now… we’re here. I was able to make it back. I kept my promise.”

“Can you replace your core?”

A snort came, and Max moved to the side, dodging the blood-covered phlegm that flew free.

“There is no time. I have nothing left to consume. I’ve already eaten the small stash I keep, and none of that is enough. I’m afraid—”

Max held out his weapon he had gotten made in Igarra’s world.

“Take it.”

Both golden eyes locked on to what he held, and Rakonath even turned his snout to the weapon that was being offered.

“You… cannot. That is too much.”

“No,” Max replied, shaking his head and pushing it closer to her mouth. “Eat it. I can replace a weapon. I cannot replace you.”

A tear rolled down the scales from Aerthen’s golden eye, and she moved her head slowly.

“Max Hoste… you are different from any other human I thought was possible. Would you really offer me this?”

Dropping the weapon on the ground, Max summoned the two daggers he had kept from the other day and added them to the pile. Soon over twenty magical weapons of all different qualities were piled up on the hard stone floor.

“Life is more important than things. You are more important than any object. So please, take these and consume them.”

Stretching out his hand, Max scratched a few of the cracked scales gently on her snout.

“Both Rakonath and I need you.”

A labored breath came, and then Aerthen cleared her throat, opened her mouth, and used her tongue to pull in a few of the weapons on top.

“It is hard to argue with that,” she said after swallowing the first few items. “Still, I am grateful for your kindness.”

Rakonath freed himself from the place he had been against the large red dragon and came to where Max was standing, finally revealing how much he had grown.

“Uh… what happened to you?”

“What do you mean?” the dragon asked, giving himself a quick inspection. “I am fine.”

“No… you’re huge. I mean like… you’ve grown again! You easily are now the size of most houses where I grew up. Soon…”

Pausing, Max started to smile, the worry and concern of Aerthen gone for a moment as he took a few steps back and looked at the dragon he was bonded with.

“How big do you have to get before we could perhaps fly together?”

A trill came from Rakonath and was cut off as Aerthen snorted.

“Not yet… I’m not sure if it is safe. I inflicted some pain on Kemruss. He will be hurt, but based on his size, I would expect him to return in a month or two.”

“How big is he?”

Aerthen didn’t reply, her mouth chewing on some of the weapons for a moment until she swallowed.

“He is about a fifth bigger than me.”

That is a large dragon.

And why are all the gold ones seemingly so mean?

Do not forget the gold dragon which gave you that mark.

Nodding at no one, Max frowned.

“Can you two be safe? For like a month?”

Aerthen nodded her head slowly. “We can. I will ensure that no one who isn’t invited comes into my domain. With what you have given me, I should recover soon. There is no way I can repay what I owe for what you have done?”

“You don’t owe me a thing,” Max replied. “Friends don’t owe friends.”

A thrum started and then stopped, the red dragon’s face turning into a snarl as the laughter appeared to hurt.

“That word… from most it would seem as nothing more than a tool to get close and then betray someone. Yet when you say it… it feels different.”

“It’s because I don’t need anything or want anything from you in return for our friendship. Already, you have proven yourself to be a protector of Rakonath. That was a promise you made, but you went beyond that, almost dying in the process. Had you failed, I would not have held it over you, nor would I have required anything in return. I’m certain the pain of the loss of a relationship I see between you two would have been hard enough.”

Huffing, she nodded.

“You are wise for someone so young. I am grateful then… that I can call you friend.”

“What am I?”

Turning his attention to the silver dragon that was now pressing his head against his side, Max reached over and started scratching the silver scales.

“I don’t have an answer for that yet. You’re not a friend because what I feel is closer than that. Likewise, you’re not some pet or simply a companion. A part of me is connected to you. Even the word child wouldn’t sound right.”

“I am no child or pet.”

Max nodded and chuckled at the change in tone, glad to hear that Rakonath understood he was neither of those.

“Correct. So for now all I can say is you are important to me. Do we need to define that with a title?”

“Beyond the fact I am your dragon and you are my person? No.”

Aerthen grunted, and Max turned to see the dragon with the shaft of his weapon, which he had crafted on Igarra’s world, sticking out of her mouth.

“Having problems?”

“This is more durable than I had anticipated. Are you certain you wish to give me this?”

“Yes, as I have said before, you are worth far more than a weapon.”

With one last bob of her large head, a crack came, and a small explosion of power erupted from the side of her mouth.

Before the shaft could fall to the ground, her tongue snaked out and wrapped around it, bringing it back into the maw that would consume it.

Watching her enjoy the treat, he continued scratching Rakonath, enjoying the moment he knew was going to end soon.

Minutes after she had swallowed his best weapon, Max could see some of the wounds starting to heal faster.

“Well it looks like you will be alright in no time.”

“Thanks to your kindness,” Aerthen replied.

“You’re leaving, aren’t you?”

Focusing on the pouting silver dragon, Max nodded.

“I have to. Still I could feel the pain you felt, and it is what brought me here. That is good to know I can sense such things. Now I’ll come here the moment I feel something is wrong.”

“Still, I miss this. Soon we must spend more time together.”

“That time will come,” Aerthen said, nudging the smaller dragon with her snout. “Both of you are learning what this rare thing is. So let it go for now.”

Max stood there and then smiled as Bob started to talk.

I think you might be on the right path. How long would it take to make this happen?

We are what? Two weeks from the wedding? Surely afterward that would give us the time we need.

It would also provide time for you and your team to get a little stronger in the tower. Of course, if only you had a weapon.

Someone must have something I can use.

“Why are you standing there, looking like you ate a whole herd of cows?”

Max shrugged.

“A little over two weeks from now I intend to be here. Do you think you will be fully recovered?”

Motioning with a claw to one of the sections that had been ripped open on her neck, Aerthen displayed all her teeth in a wicked grin.

“I should be fully healed in a week after what you gave me. Why?”

“Just wait. I know you’ll hate that question, but I think I can solve a few different things while keeping you both safe. I just need to return home to my friends and run things by them. If everything works out, we’ll be fine for a while to come.”

A single snort came, and she shook her head.

“You and these secrets. Sometimes I’m not certain you fully think out a plan and just pretend you do.”

“Sometimes I think you’re right,” Max replied. “Now then, let me give a few more scratches before I go. If I’m honest, I enjoy giving them as much as he enjoys getting them.”

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“You’re serious?” Fowl asked. “Right after the wedding?”

“Did you two have other plans?”

He grunted, and Batrire shook her head.

“Beyond a day staying in our room and just doing what we do every night? No.”

Cordellia groaned slightly, pretending to get sick at that comment.

“Let’s not go into any more details, please.”

“Bah, you’re an elf, easily in the age to find a mate. Surely you should—”

“How do you know how old I am?” their ranger asked, her eyes narrowing on Fowl.

“I… er… so, yeah I think Max’s plan is a good idea.”

Tanila frowned, still tapping her chin with a finger.

“Do you not agree, my love?”

She nodded slowly at Max’s question.

“I do… it’s just… you gave up your weapon, and that will be hard to replace. Are you certain that you can so easily acquire another one?”

“Easily? No… Acquire one? Yes. But there is going to be a cost, and for that to happen, we’re going to have to depend upon the tower to be generous, and I’m going to have to see if King Dagon will allow me to plunder his armory for a moment. I’m all out of materials, and while I could easily use the dagger I just gifted him, I’d prefer something with a reach.”

“Do you want to use my hammer?”

Max frowned for a moment and then moved his head from side to side.

“Would you be willing to let me?”

“Gods yes, I mean, you made it and gifted it. Besides, I’m not doing much with it. If speed is what we need, then you’re going to want something you can use.”

“Then it’s settled. We’ll stop farming the bonus experience for now and focus on the 53rd floor and above. The day after the wedding we’ll return to Rakonath and Aerthen, and together all of us will travel to Igarra’s world.”

“Hey, babe,” Fowl exclaimed, smiling at their healer. “For our honeymoon, I got us a trip to another world!”

Groaning, she nodded and smiled.

“Only the best from you, my hairy beast.”

Tanila looked at Cordellia and stuck her finger in her mouth as the two dwarves started to make out.

71 Chapter 400 - You Can’t Bash Everything

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-7-stubs-march-25th/chapter/2141263/chapter-400-you-cant-bash-everything;[word2025-03-21 14:49],publish[2025-03-21 14:02]

Chapter 400 - You Can’t Bash Everything

“What kind of beast is that thing?” Fowl asked as they stared at the boss from the entrance of the gate they knew they would have to pass through.

“An undead, three-headed, fire-breathing, forty-foot-tall wolf?”

“So everything we don’t want to fight. And it’s in a room that’s what? A quarter of a mile around with a roof that’s a hundred or so yards high?”

“About that,” Cordellia said. “So we can’t escape once we’re inside.”

“Who said anything about escaping?” Batrire asked. “I mean, we got Max here. Surely he can take this out on his own.”

Feeling the gaze of everyone, all he could do was nod, spinning Fowl’s hammer in his hand.

This feels wrong and right. I mean… we took two days on that last floor because it was over forty miles long. The experience was good, and there were a lot of gem drops, but the few monsters I had them attack all required half a dozen shots or more from Cordellia to kill. Even Tanila had to use a couple spells to take one out unless she charged something far longer than usual.

Which means the difficulty of what you are facing is going up far faster than you imagined. And the fact we have faced undead on the last two floors made this run not as good for us. No skills, no abilities, no stats .

I’m just glad whatever happened on the 51st changed. I wouldn’t want to fight undead in the water.

Can undead even swim?

“Give me a moment. Just talking things over with Bob.”

“Take your time,” Fowl replied, stretching his shoulders. “I know this all falls on you, so we’re going to wait as long as you say.”

Max watched as each breath from the undead beast sent small gusts of flames from its nose. Red eyes locked on the gate they were standing just outside of, all five of them seeming to be begging for them to venture into the soot covered space.

Beyond some simple rocks that looked charred and the stone walls that had giant gouges out of it which had to be claw marks, the place this boss lived in was barren of any other life.

Yet in the cave, at the top of the stone ceiling rested a purple object which cast a purple glow upon everything.

Even the black fur of the boss seemed to look off.

When we start, I can go all out. Better to try to end it, or would you prefer to see what I can do?

You should easily outpower it on stats and skills. Yet something in this place feels off.

So just smack it as much as I can and then see if I need to use a skill?

When has not simply bashing your way through something not worked?

He knew Bob was joking but also the truth of that statement.

“Okay. We’ll go in. I’ll charge it and attempt to simply brain it to death with the mace. You four stay back, and Fowl protects you.”

“Are you expecting something bad?” Cordellia asked. “I mean, why should we even worry about it reaching us?”

“It’s the first boss on floors that most never tread,” Tanila replied. “He’s being smart. Putting those points of intelligence to use.”

Nodding, Max cracked his neck.

“We’ll go as one. Let me know when you’re all ready.”

Cordellia pulled a special arrow from her quiver. Max smiled to himself, seeing how many she had hoarded, using it every chance the cooldown expired to summon another of her arrows that did extra damage.

“We’re ready,” Fowl said as everyone nodded.

“On three.”

“One, two, three.”

Each of their feet crossed the area they knew the gate would come down, and a step past it brought the sound of metal racing toward the ground.

With a loud boom, the heavy barrier fell into place, and the boss roared, immediately charging toward them.

Max didn’t hesitate, moving to meet it, seconds passing from that time and soon was midair, swinging the weapon he held at the closest head.

As if there wasn’t anything solid there, the weapon passed through the undead boss, and Max twisted using an air wall as fire from the other two mouths came rushing toward him.

It’s incorporeal! A ghost?

Bob didn’t reply, magic already having been summoned and flames erupted from where he was near the boss, a fire nova going off.

They went through nothing, causing no damage, and the boss turned, all three heads attempting to chew or bite the man who had presented himself as a treat.

Every spell Max threw at it missed, and none of his strikes hit, but when one of the heads managed to create a swath of fire that washed over a part of him, the pain from it was real.

[Curse Acquired - Weakness]

[Consume is Attempting to Cleanse Curse - Weakness]

Give me a moment, this is stronger than usual.

Max grunted, feeling a large chunk of his power and speed suddenly vanish.

Glancing at his team, he saw Tanila summoning a large ice spear.

“Don’t attack!” he shouted, using an air wall that Bob created to dodge another attack before grabbing onto a stone spear and moving slightly away.

As he darted around the boss, feeling like it was chasing him like a stick, he saw Tanila’s spell traveling upward, aimed at the center of the ceiling.

It didn’t reach the target falling short, but he knew what it was.

She’s right! We need to destroy that!

Pulling his bow out, Max began hopping upward, using the spears Bob created, climbing into the air, and let go of an arrow.

It struck the purple object and a chip fell.

A loud howl came from the boss below him, and it began to glow.

[Consume has Cleansed Curse - Weakness]

Faster!

Max didn’t hesitate, jumping to the airwall Bob gave him, sending arrow after arrow as his skill created stone, ice, and air spears.

None did the damage that they needed to do, small pieces of purple falling from the ceiling.

It’s not strong enough. We need to hit it. Be ready.

Max almost wanted to laugh as they flew through the air, the wind ability he had never fully tested like he knew he should have from Riniya sent him moving upward like an arrow from a bow.

Gone was the bow, replaced with the hammer he was borrowing from Fowl.

Two large wind blades formed as he sped toward the crystal, preparing to race at the object he now realized was pulsing slightly. Its movement had been so little that he couldn't notice it from the distance it had been.

It's... alive?

Glancing down below, Max saw the undead boss had waves of fire rolling out from it, over fifty yards in every direction. The size and power of the fire that came from it was far stronger than any spell Tanila had ever produced, even with her fire elemental, and even worse was that it had turned toward his group, now prepared to go after a target it could reach.

The hammer connected, and a large crack appeared in whatever kind of material this thing was.

Part crystal, part rock, part gelatinous, he wasn't sure, but Max knew this had a part in all this.

Use it all, I will help if need be.

Knowing that Bob didn't have large stores of power saved up and yet the fact his skill sensed the change in everything taking place, Max went for it all.

[Power Strike]

[Ghost Strike]

[Rampage]

[Magical Strike]

[Quick Attack]

[Berserker]

The world slowed even more than it sometimes felt. With his stats it had taken a few days to figure out how to function in a world that seemed to move at a snail's pace. Every day he would walk slower, move slower, react like most.

Now for a moment he had let it all go free.

And then like a rush of power with everything flowing through him, the truth of what he was and could be came again.

The sound rose from the initial strike and continued to thunder out, his strikes raining down so hard and fast it would be impossible for most to realize it was more than one single long sound.

Rage poured through him as he realized that even in a tower that wasn't as strong as him, there were still dangers that could take those he cared about down.

Worse was the knowledge he had believed himself so strong he handicapped himself.

Feed it. Let the skill burn.

Berserker never felt so sweet than it did at this moment.

He wasn't sure what fell around him as the purple mass, five times his height and at least thirty feet wide shattered in what seemed like an instant.

One moment it was solid, and the next he was through all the outer shell, finding a soft pulsing piece of organic flesh crushed beneath the hammer he had borrowed.

A slight chill ran through him at that moment.

Your friends!

Bob's words broke him from the rage, and Max turned, angling himself as Bob used the new wind skill to propel him toward the undead boss like a rock falling from the sky.

He could see the waves of flames radiating from the beast. It was cascading around his friends.

A shield stood strong with the four inside, Fowl bravely standing ready with his shield out and Tanila summoning a giant ice spear.

Even Cordellia had one of her special arrows loaded and ready.

They all know what would happen the moment that barrier broke if he didn't get there in time.

A smile formed on his lips.

They're stronger and braver than I gave them credit for.

When you were gone, they remembered who they were. Tower climbers.

Laughing in that brief moment between thought and action, Max came at the boss.

His strike connected against the middle head, and a shower of gore came as he plunged into the hole he had created.

The force of his impact wrenched the beast off all four legs, slamming the three heads into the charred soil and soot.

Without wasting a heartbeat, Max rebounded off the ground, the hammer spinning around him as Bob sent waves of wind blades out from him in a cyclone, chopping the little remaining part of the middle head into chunks of flesh.

Max went after the right head, leaping off the ground as Bob continued the assault with the new ability, sending blade after blade at the exposed neck of the left head.

Both heads stretched in opposite directions as the concussive force of their attacks struck. A part of the boss started to split down the middle where the first head had been.

There wasn’t enough time though for that to happen as Max unleashed a torrent of swings, the hammer he had made for his friend doing the job it had been created to do.

Each strike rent flesh and bone from the skull until a large chunk of it was shattered and gone, exposing the tiny brain that lay inside. A small pulsing purple mass which matched what had been inside the part safely tucked inside the ceiling found the same fate as the first. Gone in a single strike.

Spinning to help with the third head, Max couldn’t help but smile, seeing that Bob had already cut it off at the neck, the final one bouncing off the black dirt.

Berserker refreshed, and he knew the boss was gone as the notification appeared.

Loot. Focus .

Like cold water dumped over one’s head, Bob’s words snapped him from the state he knew he was in.

All the pent-up emotions vanished, and without missing a second, he turned and began gathering pieces of the boss, darting around with a speed he knew his friends couldn’t follow.

Before the refresh ended, Max had stored the head Bob had removed, collected a few pieces of fur and bones that had survived their onslaught, as well as a single eye which he wasn’t sure where it had come from.

Multiple pieces of the shell that had encased the piece at the ceiling were also stored.
And then the world returned to a more normal pace.

Breathing heavily, Max moved to where his friends stood, none having moved from the place he had left them.

Their weapons were lowered, yet he could see their faces.

Fowl’s head bobbed slightly up and down, and he could see his friend was biting his lips, eyes telling him how bad that moment had almost been.

Batrire had a tear that was rolling down one cheek, almost lost in the beard she always kept so well cared for.

Cordellia’s eyes were the size of large coins, her ears even higher as her forehead and face seemed to stretch at what she had just witnessed.

Yet of all their faces, the one he cared the most about was Tanila’s.

She stood there, having dismissed the ice spear, her lips forming a soft smile and her green eyes locked on him.

Even from here, he could hear her almost in his mind.

“I love you,” he whispered, knowing she couldn’t hear him.

Yet she saw his lips and said the same thing.

As he moved toward the team, he saw Fowl’s face change, and Max started to laugh as the warrior pointed behind him, eyes widening and his mouth moving in the pattern he had seen hundreds of times.

One day he’ll learn some different curse words.

One day. But not today.

71-1 Chapter 400a - Pieces on a Board https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-7-stubs-march-25th/chapter/2141422/chapter-400a-pieces-on-a-board; [word2025-03-21 15:09],[publish2025-03-21 15:02]

Chapter 400a - Pieces on a Board

“It appears that our plans have… diverted from what we had originally intended. Do we have any other options?”

The woman stood there, cloaked in the halls, watching the pair she had made a bargain with. Promises, trades, and the betrayal of a friend had brought her here. There were too many pieces moving, and for so long she thought she had understood the game. She had believed she could control enough pieces, set the board in the way she wanted, and rise to power, and yet now… the truth came. She wasn’t even out of the training program yet.

“Our plans are still in motion.” A voice came from the one on the left. It was deep and had the tone of an insect-based lifeform. “You tried to maneuver outside what we had agreed upon, and now those pieces you were supposed to command are beyond what you can control. Tell us, why should we continue to honor our part of the bargain if you did not honor yours?”

“I did honor my part!”

Her hands had almost formed fists, yet she kept her calm, not letting those emotions inside her get away and ruin any chance she had at salvaging this moment.

“Do not raise your voice at us.”

It took great willpower to resist the urge to shiver as the woman of the pair spoke. Her voice had the lisp of a race she knew was older than many and stronger than most could imagine.

“Forgive me.”

A slight nod was all she got in return for humbling herself.

“He is right. We are fine. Things are moving as we expected, even with your… failure to secure that which we had originally intended.”

“It was supposed to go to someone else! How was I—”

A robed hand rose, and she stopped.

She felt a power, a force come from that simple action, and even here in the halls of the watchers, where actions against others were forbidden, she could sense the difference between herself and the one who stood across from her.

“That was explained. You enlist a friend, ask for help, and try to cover your tracks. It was also done to fortify a defense you hoped to have in case things failed. Do not lie, as I have played this game far longer, and before you were ever a twinkle in the eye of the system.”

As her hand lowered, the slightest glow came from a pair of eyes that were white for a fraction of a second, casting away all doubt about who she was dealing with.

“That is on you, and should the time come and things be found out, you will face the problem alone if you do not carry out what we now require.”

She wanted to respond, but the truth was that she had messed up. Her plan had backfired, and now she knew that if things did go as she feared, not only would her friend be against her, but so would Phaius and Ockrim.

“What do I need to do?”

A soft chuckle came from the robed man.

“We will send someone to notify you of what we need next. Until then, stop trying to play a game you know nothing about. You move pieces on one level, not realizing there are an infinite number of levels stacked upon each other and on every side. The opening you took only sealed your fate.”

“Which is?”

“A pawn under our finger.”

72 Chapter 401 - The Greatest Elixir

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-7-stubs-march-25th/chapter/2143608/chapter-401-the-greatest-elixir; [word2025-03-24 14:38],[publish2025-03-22 14:02]

Chapter 401 - The Greatest Elixir

All five of them stood next to the chest that had appeared.

None had been as large as this one in all their time in the tower.

Power seemed to radiate from the purple metal, and the embossed depiction of the boss they had fought had both the blob on the top of the etching and the three-headed wolf underneath.

“My hands are shaking,” Fowl stated. “I mean, look at them.”

Everyone saw their warrior holding up a weapon hand and that it was shaking slightly.

“So who opens it?” Cordellia asked.

“Max,” Batrire said. “He did this.”

Glancing at all of them and seeing them nodding, he stepped forward and put his hand on the reward for the boss.

He shoved and then groaned when it didn’t open.

“Uh… it’s one of those.”

Chuckles came, and all of them quickly moved to where he stood, each with a hand on the lid.

A green shimmer of light appeared for a moment, and then a clicking sound came, causing the lid to open on its own.

Everyone leaned to look inside, eyes widening at what lay within the swirling purple dimensional space.

“There are those elixirs again,” Tanila said quietly.

Silence was her reply as the other four all bobbed their heads slowly.

“Look at the rings for each of us,” Cordellia. “The color is weird.”

“And look at the size of those crystals,” Max added. “Erwini is going to yank her beard out if we give her one.”

Inside were three larger-than-usual clear crystals, and while everyone seemed anxious to inspect the rings, all of them couldn’t take their eyes off the five golden elixirs that each knew granted a skill or more when drunk.

“So… who goes first?” Fowl asked.

Max didn’t wait, reaching in and taking the purple ring. He held it up for everyone to see. A light glow came from the metal band which had no markings. It was smooth to the touch and almost transparent.

“Not what I had meant,” their warrior stated. “Still, what’s it give?”

Ignoring his friend, Max slid the ring on his finger and took a deep breath.

“Let’s find out.”

[Inspect Ring]

*****

Ring of the Incorporeal

+ 10% to all stats

Incorporeal Form - The wearer can become incorporeal for 5 seconds, becoming immune to all physical and elemental damage. Psychic attacks are still effective. The wearer can move as normal. When the effect wears off, any object or spell that is within their Incorporeal form will be tested against their body strength. The weaker object will be destroyed. Cooldown 1 Month.

*****

“Uh… yeah… you all just need to get yours and see if they’re the same.”

As one they reached in, collecting the ring that they had just heard was too good to talk about.”

“10%?” Cordellia asked.

“Ogre nuts,” Batrire replied as she bobbed her head.

“This effect… it can be good or bad,” Tanila said. “I mean… provided one is able to get away from whatever is coming at them.”

“Yeah, that’s the problem I see,” Max replied. “Still, the 10% is a boon.”

“And we still have those elixirs,” their warrior said as he tapped the edge of the chest.

“Why don’t you go first?” Tanila said as she patted Cordellia’s arm.

Grinning, their archer reached in and pulled out the elixir that was marked for her. Slowly she pulled the stopper and then drank it all. When the beam of light shot from her mouth and she went rigid for a moment, she almost dropped to her knees afterward. Her hand snaked out and caught the edge of the chest, keeping her upright.

“Cordellia?”

“I’m fine. Thank you, Batrire. I… my bow skill… it got upgraded to legendary!”

“Dear gods,” Fowl said, almost choking. “Legendary!?”

Nodding, their ranger shook her head and smacked her lips.

“That taste… it’s like a perfectly ripe boobou.”

“I do love those,” Tanila stated as she motioned to their healer. “Go ahead.”

Nodding, Batrire reached in and took hers, and put on the same dazzling light show as their ranger had.

She had been careful, making sure to lean against the chest, and it held her up as her legs gave out too.

“Gods, we’re in for a treat!” Fowl exclaimed. “She never goes weak in the knees.”

“Sounds like you’re doing it wrong,” Cordellia teased.

After a few seconds, Batrire rubbed her lips and blinked half a dozen times.

“My heal… it’s legendary as well.”

This is interesting. What are you going to do this time?

As Fowl reached in for his turn, Max knew that Bob was right with that question.

So many of mine are already legendary. Do you think it could actually push something to godly, or would it just choose a random one and increase it?

I’m not certain, but still the growth potential is far beyond what most might imagine. Even you could do well with another skill of that rank.

Provided it’s not Baking.

Laughter echoed in his head as a beam of light shot out from Fowl’s mouth.

He managed to stay upright, and then a few tears started to roll down his cheek.

“Oh, I’m not sure I want to hear this,” Batrire said. “What did you get?”

“My shield skill. It’s legendary!”

He was smiling, and Batrire nodded.

Max motioned to Tanila, who started to reach into the chest.

“Wait… my weapon got upgraded to legendary as well!”

His voice had been more of a squeak, and everyone turned to see that he was nodding quickly.

“I got two! Two legendary skills!”

“Ogre nuts,” Cordellia muttered as she came over and slapped the dwarf on the arm. “Congrats though, shorty.”

Even in a fog, he simply nodded and smiled as Batrire came and hugged him.

“Two legendary… that’s…”

“Broken,” Max said, finishing Tanila’s statement. “Time to see if the tower loves you.”

Shaking her head, their mage waited a moment, letting them celebrate Fowl’s success. After he seemed placated and everyone was done congratulating him, she took hers and drank it.

Her hands trembled, and the crystal vial fell to the ground.

Max could see her eyes watering, and she frowned, clutching her chest.

“What’s wrong?”

Shaking her head, she said nothing, burying her face against his shoulder and starting to cry.

Silence stretched on for over a minute as Max held her, feeling tears run through his shirt. All that time he held her tight,

When she was able to stop the outburst, she sniffed and wiped her face.

“My… red skill…”

A gasp came from Batrire, and Max nodded.

Pulling her close, he held her for a few more minutes, doing what he could to comfort her.

How bad is that?

For her? I cannot imagine. She is strong, but the power that skill will now have… it would be difficult for me to resist if I had not evolved. Anyone else… they would crumble beneath it. For those without real power… she could walk through a town and render the population into empty shells .

Knowing the truth of what she could do and how Tanila obviously knew that now, he held her just a little tighter.

I guess that will make my decision easier for now.

“Forgive me… it’s just—”

“You don’t need to apologize, dear,” Batrire said, rubbing her friend’s arm. “We can only imagine how you feel. Each of us knows how much you dislike that skill. Even at that rank, it doesn’t change who you are to us.”

“But it does change me,” she whispered. “I can already feel the urge to use it.”

Max lifted her chin with a finger.

“I know you can resist it. The woman I love is stronger than a skill. You taught me that someone can overcome any kind of desire.”

A smile Max knew was forced appeared, and she nodded.

“You need to use yours.”

“No, I can wait.”

“No you can’t,” Tanila replied. “We do this as a team. You know the rules.”

Seeing how determined she looked, Max fought the urge to argue and gave her a quick kiss and then moved to the chest. Taking the elixir out he studied it in his hand.

Here goes nothing.

Drinking it for the first time wasn’t like anything he could have begun to imagine.

Power erupted through his entire being. No amount of sleep or rest ever made him feel as good as he did at this moment.

And the taste in his mouth brought him to a place of peace.

No matter how crazy it seemed, the taste that danced across his tongue right now was one he hadn't experienced in ages.

"My grandmother's cookies…"

Even in the midst of all that, the notification that waited for him finally caught his attention.

I do not think the others were given this.

[Skill Upgrade Granted]

[Multiple Skill Available for Upgrade]

[Choose One Skill to Upgrade to Legendary]

[Armor Crafting]

[Regeneration]

[Blink]

[Alchemy]

"Max?"

"Uh… So…"

"Dear gods," Fowl muttered. "Please don't tell me you got two or more legendary skills."

Shaking his head, he took a deep breath and let it out.

"I get to choose between four skills to make legendary."

"Seriously?" Cordellia asked. "Which ones?"

"Armor Crafting, Regeneration, Blink, and Alchemy."

"Well that's easy," their warrior said. "Armor crafting so that you can make us armor too."

"Why not potions?" Batrire asked. "Imagine the elixirs and things he could create. I mean… perhaps what we just had is craftable."

As the two dwarves started to discuss which crafting might be better, Max looked at their archer, who just shrugged.

"I'm not one to have an opinion. Honestly, I'm not certain, and part of me doesn't want to be responsible for what you pick."

Tanila shrugged as he waited for her to speak.

"Ask Bob. He will probably know best."

I don't have to pick right now, do I?

There is nothing that appears you do. Still… I can see three good options. Blink isn't a bad skill for most. The cooldown is terrible, and perhaps if it was legendary rank, it would be better. However, that means you're taking a risk on a skill you currently have.

Provided I have souls.

Correct. What is your initial thought?

Max closed his eyes, blocking out the sound of his friends, who continued to seem experts on which skill might serve them better.

Armor Crafting means I might be able to use the dragon scale I was given or any of the other ones we have. Each of those has a lot of potential, and it would be hard to turn down the ability to make armor just as powerful as what the weapons appear to be.

We both know if the ability scales like Weapon Crafting did, then I could help my friends be in a much better position than where we are right now.

And since you are planning on returning to Igarra's world, it would allow you the chance to make things without having to reveal your hand here. Suddenly crafting legendary armor might cause people to ask questions you don't want to answer. Especially in a dwarven city.

That brings us to Alchemy. We both know there is potential in the skill, yet most never get it to that level because of how hard it is to progress, let alone the required materials. Would it be possible to craft these elixirs as we go through the tower?

I don't know and yet… I would be certain there are rumors of stories of alchemists of old who were able to. If that is the case, then it would be simply finding the materials. Similar to your current situation, none of what your Faction has is worthy of the skill you possess because most do not progress far enough into the tower.

Then we have Regeneration. How many times has that skill saved my life?

If I am honest, it may be the greatest skill out of all three choices. Since it became epic, the ability for you to recover was far greater than at rare. This means we are looking at a potentially exponential growth of healing. We both know there are stories of creatures who had this kind of power and the difficulty heroes had of taking them down.

Similar to Igarra… one has to drain them of mana to prevent them from being able to keep healing.

Correct.

Opening his eyes, Max saw all of them patiently standing there.

Smiling, he gave them a quick nod.

"Figured it out?" Fowl asked.

“I did.”

73 Chapter 402 - Legendary Skill Choice https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-7-stubs-march-25th/chapter/2143716/chapter-402-legendary-skill-choice; [word2025-03-24 15:11],[publish2025-03-22 15:02]

Chapter 402 - Legendary Skill Choice

“I’m going to choose Regeneration. The skill is so strong, and it has allowed us to not have to worry about Batrire using her heals on me. While I thought about Armor Crafting, I can ask someone else to help make armor for you all. Besides, if things get so bad, I can always find an armor crafter and kill them, right?”

He grinned as both dwarves frowned.

“Seriously?” Fowl asked.

“He’s kidding, you fool,” Batrire said as she elbowed him.

“While I can maybe find a creature in the tower with this kind of skill, the problem is I have no idea when that might happen and having faced a dragon that took forever to kill because she could regenerate, I had to wear her out, eventually draining her mana reserves dry.”

“So you’d be unkillable?” Cordellia asked.

“No, but I’d be harder to kill,” Max replied. “There are still lots of ways to kill me, one of which is simply removing my head. But I wasn’t able to do that against a giant dragon.”

“So choose it, and tell us what the improved skill looks like,” their ranger stated.

Fighting back the urge to smirk, Max nodded.

[Regeneration Selected]

[Regeneration has been Upgraded to Legendary]

[Skill Description - Regeneration]

*****

Regeneration - Legendary Skill: This skill allows the user to regain lost hit points at the cost of Mana. 1000 Hit Points may be recovered each second at the cost of one Mana. At this rank, the skill may regrow a lost body part or organ at the cost of twenty Mana. Limb regeneration speed is tenfold. The skill can regenerate partial head loss provided 1/10th of the head still remains. The skill automatically engages if the user is unconscious unless no Mana points are available.

*****

Even he couldn’t help but blink his eyes repeatedly as he reread the description.

It appears that was the wise choice .

“So…”

“I made the right decision,” Max answered. “I… I can regenerate 1000 HP a second.”

“Holy elf tits,” Batrire cursed. “Per second!?”

Nodding, Max tried to really consider what that meant.

Tanila squeezed his arm and smiled.

“I’m just glad that means you’ll be safer when you do stupid stuff.”

“And boy does he,” their warrior muttered.

He could see how Tanila’s eyes seemed ready to burst again, the welling of wetness, and knew they needed to head out.

“Let’s grab the crystals and return. We can rest and then figure out what we’ll do tomorrow.”

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“I’ll be fine,” Tanila said. “Stop worrying about me.”

Max frowned but nodded, not wanting to push the subject any more and knowing she wasn’t going to budge on the decision.

“Alright. Then we leave in twenty,” he informed everyone as they sat in the living area of the quarters Erwini had given them at the Faction house. “We’ve got three more floors before the boss and only so many days till the wedding.”

“Bah, stop reminding me,” Fowl said as he rose off the couch. “I got another bill delivered this morning. Someone tell me how flowers cost so much gold.”

“Do you love me?”

Their warrior turned and saw Batrire fluttering her eyelashes at him, a smile beaming through her beard.

“Uh… yeah.”

“Then stop complaining and pay for those flowers, or so help me I’ll rip the short hairs off you tonight!”

Gone was the simple, replaced with a gaze that might have given the last boss a run for its money.

Max felt his lips pull back as he watched his friend bob his head and move quickly toward the door.

“I think you scared him,” Cordellia said after Fowl had left the room.

“Of course I did. Only the weird dwarves like that kind of treatment.”

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“I feel like we’re rushing,” Fowl muttered as he scrounged through the remains of the mechanical spiders that had been the size of a single-story house. “I mean, don’t get me wrong, I like being ready to beat the 58th floor, but are you sure this pace is the right one?”

Max cleared his throat and glanced back at the three women who were collecting the clear gems scattered along the metal floor.

“You know the pain of trying to protect and lead the group. Both of us can see how Tanila is still trying to handle the pain of what that elixir did to her. Unlike the rest of us, she feels cursed by that twist of the gods.”

His friend nodded and frowned, glancing back at the trio.

“Still, I hate watching you kill everything so easily. I mean… not much has changed in all our time together, but you completely obliterate everything you hit with a weapon or spell.”

“You did fine when I brought a few for you all to practice on.”

Scoffing, Fowl shook his head.

“We were babysat, and you know it. Not once were we in any real danger. If things went sideways at all, you would have taken out those two spiders in a single hit. Knowing that makes us not give everything even when we try. It’s not the same.”

He is right, and you know it.

Bob’s occasional comment about this path mimicked his friends.

Time is our enemy, and you know that. After we finish this next boss, we can take a moment and recover. A few days off before the wedding will give Tanila the time she needs to work through whatever it is she won’t share.

I’m telling you to be careful around her. Don’t push her to open up or share so much. She knows you care, and I know that is why you are trying so hard, but when you struggled with the hunger and power I offered, none of them could make you choose the right path. Even Tanila stood there, silently acting as an anchor for you, simply giving you a safe space to return to.

Closing his eyes, Max rubbed them and took a deep breath, holding it for a moment before slowly releasing it.

“Sorry, I’m just trying to be the friend you’ve always been to me.”

Opening his eyes, he smiled at Fowl.

“No, you’ve been perfect. I’m just rushing in again. Every time I think we’re doing fine, something happens, and I get scared. Honestly, I’m scared about what happens after you two get married. Then comes what happens with Tanila and the baby and how this skill affects her. On top of all that, I feel a thread is now pulling me to

Rakonath. If it wasn’t for the fact I really don’t need to sleep that much, I’m certain I’d be worthless.”

His friend stored the mechanical leg that was longer than him and then came over, giving Max a playful punch.

“You’re still my brother, and that means no matter what, I’m here for you.”

Chuckling, Max smiled and nodded.

“I always wanted a brother. Even if he had to be shorter and hairier.”

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“So let me get this straight. Are you five actually about to attempt the boss on the 59th floor?”

Max nodded at Fudumod, who couldn’t stop shaking his head.

“And you’re serious about the fact everything you have faced so far has been robotic in nature? Like those pictures I showed you?”

“I did let you see the leg from yesterday. Why would you ask that?”

The dwarf gave Max and then the others a hard stare, frowning the entire time.

“After you showed me that, I went to the castle and spoke with a few of the dwarves who kept records of anything we knew about the tower and the later floors. They have come to the conclusion that something is wrong, as what you are facing isn’t something you should be dealing with yet.”

“That’s nothing new,” Cordellia whispered to Tanila.

“What?”

“Nothing! Just talking with our mage!”

Fudumod’s frown turned into a grimace.

“I would caution you about what may be beyond this next portal. You do have a recall stone, correct?”

“We do,” Max replied. “Are you able to tell us what we are about to face?”

“Not specifically, but based on what you showed me and what I have been able to find out, it will most likely be another creation like the ones you have faced but far worse. There have been rumors of magical barriers which prevent physical and magical damage. Some launch barrages of magic our warriors who survived had never seen, giant arrow-like things that explode with fire and metal, like a dwarven barrel bomb but even more powerful. Only two records were preserved, and each one was a different creature. One was said to be a large wolf or dog. The other was a bear. Both parties lost members before their member with the gem could shatter it.”

Each of them glanced at the other, all aware of what they had faced before and the problem that came from mechanical bosses.

“I’m good,” Fowl said as he cracked his neck with his hands. “It won’t be the first one.”

“You’ve faced another!?”

“We did,” Max replied. “It wasn’t a fun fight, so I think we have some knowledge of what we are dealing with. Most are weak to lightning, even if the other elements aren’t effective on them.”

Snorting, Fudumod pulled out a notebook and started writing in it.

“We appreciate the advice and warning,” Batrire said. “Still, our options are limited. The time it would take to wait for the floor to respawn would be, what, ten days?”

“About that, I believe it is at this level. Occasionally it’s been up to fifteen.”

Pulling out a journal, Max wrote down that information and then stored it.

“Good to know it increased apparently as the floor numbers do. Still, are we all good?”

Everyone gave a thumbs-up, with Tanila being the last one to do so.

“Then if no one else has anything to do before we head inside, I’ll go first,” Max stated.

“Just be safe,” the older dwarf warned them. “We’ve got a wedding planned, and no one wants to replace that with something else.”

Fowl started to scowl, and their healer reached out and stopped him as he began to open his mouth.

“We appreciate the concern,” Batrire said. “No worries. Ockrim himself is watching over us, and I know that means we will succeed.”

Giving their warrior a gentle shove, she moved him toward the portal.

Motioning at the other two, Max quickly caught up and reached the portal first, waiting for all four to arrive.

“I’ll go in. Count to ten and then come.”

Touching the shimmering portal, he felt power flowing through it, stronger than before, and then the option to select the 59th floor appeared.

Selecting it, the world around him shifted, and he found himself in a circular shaft with wires set inside a patchwork metal wall. Beneath him was a platform and it only took a moment to realize he was on a lift of some kind.

Looking upward, he saw an opening with light streaming in from fifty feet above him. The sounds of shouting and cheering were bouncing off the opening.

His stomach tightened as he realized there wasn’t a portal to leave anywhere in the ten-yard-wide area where he was standing.

Soon Fowl appeared, and then the others joined him.

“What in the gods is this?” their warrior asked.

“And what is that sound?”

Max was about to respond to their ranger when the cacophony of noise suddenly shut off, and a single one came forth.

“MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS! IT IS TIME TO SEE IF OUR CHAMPION CAN WIN AGAIN!”

A roar twice as loud as before came after those words.

“What was that?”

Glancing at the others, Max realized they could not understand what he had easily heard.

My skill?

Yes.

So that means…

We’re apparently fighting another race in the tower.

74 Chapter 403 - A Fight to Prove a Point

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Chapter 403 - A Fight to Prove a Point

“What’s happening?” Batrire asked, a bit of concern in her voice.

As she spoke, the platform they were on started to rise as the thick cables began to move.

“We’re in a tower floor, and somewhere up there is a race from another world,” Max replied, his weapon and shield out, turning in a circle to see what was going to appear when they reached the top.

“How do you know that!?”

“I can understand them,” Max replied, not looking at Cordellia. “I have a skill… remember?”

“Who can keep track of every skill you have? Still what—”

“Just wait, please. I’m not sure what we’re going to face, and I don’t want to wait to see what’s up there. Stay put.”

Without giving anyone time to protest, Max jumped upward, feeling Bob add a little bit of wind magic to his feet to propel him out of the rising lift and into the bright sky above.

All around him was a colosseum crafted in metal, filled with the beardless dwarves and weird-looking goblins they had faced before.

His appearance silenced them for a moment before a loud *Booo* came from the crowd.

“It appears one of the villains of the tower has returned! It is time for paaaayyyybaccckk!”

The voice carried out from boxes all over the arena, and as Max came to land on the metal floor, he saw the lattice cage above and around them.

A three-hundred-yard circle was their prison, with a roof of small metal wire to prevent them from escaping the fifty-foot-tall walls.

His eyes tracked the stands as those in them hurled insults and some threw different containers at the wire enclosure.

Thousands of them…

Perhaps maybe even ten thousand or more. And there is the one in charge.

Max’s eyes found what had to be the place where those in charge sat, a large opulent box, filled with a variety of different robotic animals, all normal size, moving around the area where a female dwarf and a male goblin reclined on metal thrones.

Beside them was a dwarf holding a small box up to his mouth and pointing a finger at Max.

“Behold! The first of the many who will die! Which champion should be allowed to crush them?”

Dozens of names that Max didn’t know came from the crowd, but he could sense that his friends were going to be up here in less than ten seconds.

Moving to where the two who were obviously in charge were, laughing and drinking from large cups, Max jumped into the air, letting Bob handle the magic while he moved as close as possible to the wires.

Hundreds of drinks with different colored liquids were tossed in his direction. Most failed to reach him or the mesh, but a few hit it, frying instantly.

“Can you understand me?” Max shouted. “Do we really need to fight?”

The pair on the throne both started choking on their drink, and the dwarf who was obviously the announcer speaking in some mechanical device all looked at him in surprise.

“How!? How can he speak our language!?”

“I do not know, my love!” the goblin roared. “It must be a trick! Gringulndo, how is this happening!?”

The dwarf, dressed in the ugliest green and yellow outfit Max had ever seen, rubbed his bald chin with his free hand and then shrugged.

“A trap? A test? It’s the tower, my king. Still, he must die! They slayed your fourth cousin!”

The goblin rose, his size and stature larger than Dagon. His orange robe hanging from around his back, a dark purple top, and light blue pants couldn’t steal the show from the polka-dotted boots he wore. The rainbow color of dots on a lime green pair of clothes was too much, and Max couldn’t help but wince at the fashion sense of the goblin.

“You have killed one of the royal family! My wife’s blood demands yours in return! Still, what is your name, so I may etch it into the box that will hold your charred and torn skin?”

Is there any chance I can find a way to not fight?

Most likely no. Still, this is something we need to consider. There are worlds, and somehow these are connected in the tower.

“Gringulndo, is he deaf?”

“I’m not deaf,” Max replied. “I had just hoped we could find a way to end this without me killing another of your people.”

Laughter came from the dwarf who sat on the throne. As she rose, Max felt his stomach roll. The orange robe that had been draped over her shifted, and her whole outfit was the same color as the goblin’s boots.

“I would go in there myself and squash you, but the rules forbid it. Be a grateful human. I would take my time playing with all of you.”

The cacophony of noise from those in the arena rose as the hairless dwarf queen raised her hands, seeming to enjoy the praise of those gathered in the stands.

Sighing, Max shook his head.

“Then whoever you send to die, their blood is on you.”

Without waiting for a reply, he moved quickly to where the other four were, huddled in a circle, each facing a different direction.

“The pink-skinned human has insulted our beloved king and queen! As such, they will decide which of the royal line will earn the right to collect their skin!”

Max tried to block out the noise of the crowd, the words that occasionally made it through the chaos all sounding worse than any curse he had heard in his entire life.

“What is going on!?” Fowl shouted. “You seemed to piss them off.”

“Apparently, we killed a distant cousin of the queen. As such, we can’t talk our way out of this,” Max replied, equipping his shield and hammer. “Whatever we’re going to fight, it’s going to be nasty.”

“Do we have a plan?” Tanila asked as Batrire started to cast her buff.

“Don’t die, stay close, figure out what we’re facing, and hit it with everything we got.”

“That’s not much to work off of,” Fowl muttered. “I mean that’s our normal plan.”

Shaking his head, Max turned and felt the vibrations of thousands of feet banging against the stands.

“We need to be ready. I think it’s about to start.”

“The queen has chosen their end! From the dark mines of Okuhoha, Broagu shall come and crush them beneath his might!”

As one the crowd began to roar and shout.

“Broagu! Broagu! Broagu!”

“Uh… what does that mean?” Fowl asked.

“It means we’re facing someone named Broagu, and apparently they like him,” Max replied. “Who or what he is, I have no idea.”

Minutes passed, and the chaos in the crowd never stopped as spectators continued to rain down their drinks, most hitting the goblins and dwarves that sat rows beneath them.

Finally a thudding noise came, and soon it picked up the pace, growing louder and louder.

With each clang that erupted, the crowd’s roars grew.

“Broagu is in the Colosseum! Prepare yourself! Hopefully you wagered correctly on which of them dies first!”

A section of the wall underneath where the king and queen of this chaos sat began to slide apart, loud creaking of metal on metal echoing off the walls and causing them all to wince in pain.

“What in the gods is that?”

No one answered their archer as a shape came from the darkness, each step ringing out against the metal floor.

It ducked slightly to clear the opening and, when standing at full height, was forty feet tall and a colossus of metal-shaped destruction.

“A clockwork,” Fowl said. “Those… are legends.”

With mechanical arms and legs, the boss was larger than any of the robotic creatures or things they had faced on any other level.

“We need to be smart,” Max said as they watched it take a few more steps into the open space of the area they were going to be fighting in. “I can try to go all out, or we can play defensive.”

“Tear it to shreds.”

All of them glanced at Tanila, who was glaring at the boss.

“What?”

“You heard me. Rip it to pieces. You tried to offer them a way out. They rejected it. Now go show them, the tower, and anyone else watching us, what you’re capable of. Someone is still playing a game and thinks they can control us. Prove to them they are wrong.”

Her tone and voice were harsh, and had she taken her bracelet off and shown her true nobility, Max wouldn’t have thought twice about the way she spoke. Yet hearing her talk like this bothered him for some reason.

“She’s right,” Batrire said. “We’ll stay here. You got this.”

Frowning, he saw Fowl give him a nod.

“I’ve got them. You got this.”

They are right. You still have so much inside you to use, and yet we didn’t really go all out. If anyone out there is watching, we need to let them know we’re not playing around.

So use everything?

Yes. We both know I am so far from reaching the next evolution that honestly I’m not sure when it will come. If what we must do requires me to use my power to put on a show, then I will.

Clearing his throat, Max took a few steps toward the boss and spun the hammer in his hand.

[Lightning Enchantment]

Arcs of magical energy crackled along the hammerhead, and as the increase in spell took hold, some even leaped from his body and to the floor.

“It appears our victims are ready! Let’s get ready to smash!”

The metal colosseum vibrated once more from the roars and pounding of their feet, and the metal clockwork pointed a hand at Max.

“Prepare to be mounted on my wall!”

Laughing, Max made his move.

He sped toward the boss, his feet coming off the ground as Bob managed the skills they planned to use.

There is no time to play cat and mouse. Make a statement that will be heard across the entire system.

[Ultimate Form]

[Power Strike]

[Ghost Strike]

[Rampage]

[Magical Strike]

[Quick Attack]

[Berserker]

As his body grew, the boss's hand came forward, preparing to punch Max.

Each of his teeth could be seen as he swung the hammer, using one last skill to reach his target.

[Demonic Teleportation]

With the massive robotic fist out of his path, the metal that covered the boss's chest took on the full impact of his attacks.

Bob continued to drive Max forward with the wind spell, metal fragments exploding under the force of the strikes as he blew a hole through the armor that was thicker than him. Each swing of the hammer caused the metal to buckle and break, unable to withstand the force that was delivered.

In less than two seconds, he had punctured his way through the outer shell and reached the inside where cogs, gears, hoses, and other mechanical devices were moving. Inside all of it was a core, surrounded by a metal cage, a bright red light being given off as Max tore through every piece of metal that was meant to protect the heart of the clockwork.

His Engineering and Tinkering skill told him where the weak points were. A few more seconds passed as he eradicated each of the support structures that held it in place, and as soon as it was freed from where it had been suspended, Max reached out and stored it.

No time was wasted as he turned upward, knowing what lay above.

Finish it.

With the wind driving his body to where the head sat, Max's rage did what it did best.

Everything within his path was torn apart.

One hand swung with a weapon he made.

The other tore pieces free, his strength far too great for them to stay attached.

In a blink of an eye, he was where the connections for the head lay, and he smiled as Bob increased the force that drove him upward.

Storing the hammer, Max reached a place where swinging wasn't an option.

[Harden Body]

[Phasing]

He blew through the metal and found himself inside the area where a hairless dwarf sat strapped to a chair, arms moving frantically as he adjusted levers and slammed his hand down on buttons, a small orange light blinking and providing the only illumination in the tight quarters.

A shriek came from the dwarf as he stared through goggles at the appearance of Max, hovering in midair before him.

Thrusting his fist into the dwarf's chest, he grinned, watching as the man slapped at his hand and arm as it passed through.

"Time's up."

As those words came from Max's mouth, his Phasing ability ended, and a weird sound came as his hand materialized where the dwarf's heart was. With a single flick, he freed his hand, and the dwarf fell limp, held upright by his harness.

Free your legs.

Glancing down, Max realized that his legs had been encased in the metal around him, his skill and body stronger than the machine he was currently towering in.

Using his bare hands, he went to work, ripping apart the inside of the metal prison.

I've got this part now.

[Demonic Teleportation]

He appeared in the colosseum a few yards before the head of the boss of this floor, floating in the air.

Max watched as a pair of wind blades came from both sides and struck the top, causing the robotic creature to start to fall backward.

With a loud thud, it landed against the metal ground, bouncing twice before not moving again.

As the colosseum went silent, Max turned in the air, looking in the direction of the king and queen.

"I warned you. Decide if we meet again if you want someone else to meet the same fate."

Both said nothing. Each of them appeared in shock based on the expression they wore.

Boos came from the crowd, and they started to fade out as the body of the boss began to vanish, taking the spectators of this beating with it.

75 Chapter 404 - Facing Fears

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-7-stubs-march-25th/chapter/2145553/chapter-404-facing-fears;[word2025-03-24 15:10], [publish2025-03-23 15:02]

Chapter 404 - Facing Fears

That went about as well as I hoped it might. It appears that your stats were beyond anything it could handle.

Well, that combination is extremely potent. You and I both know it still isn't much compared to those with real power, though part of me is glad to know that my body is stronger than whatever metal the boss was made of with that skill.

Even if it hadn't been, your new regeneration would have easily taken care of your legs .

Yeah, I'll just ignore the pain.

Hearing a laugh from Bob, Max moved to where his friends were waiting, seeing a chest having appeared beside them.

It was half the size of the last one, and as he had expected, made of the same patchwork metal that the boss had been constructed from. A relief of the clockwork he faced was etched on it, and as he drew close, Max considered what this would mean for future floors.

So the truth... there are other sapient races, and the tower is part of their world or lives. It would also appear that some of them are well aware of what this means. Do you have any idea what they gain by defeating us?

No, but hopefully in time we can find some answers. Until then we stick with the plan.

"That was... impressive," Fowl said as Max came to rest on the ground near them. "Even more is, uh... how tall are you now?"

Chuckling, Max remembered he was still in his Ultimate Form and shrugged.

"Almost twelve feet?"

"Damn... that uh... is impressive."

"Stop thinking dirty thoughts," Batrire said as she punched their warrior.

"Gods, woman, I'm not! I'm more of the... I mean just look at him."

Wishing he could change from his armor but knowing if he did his clothes would immediately tear and be gone, causing a much worse scene, Max struck a pose, flexing a few times.

“Should we be watching this?” Cordellia asked, pretending to cover her eyes. “I’m not sure I feel comfortable with this.”

A small snort came from Tanila, who smiled at him and shook her head.

“I think they got the message. Now then, all that is left is to see what we got.”

She turned and moved to the chest and tapped it.

“Want to do the honors?”

Her tone and behavior were so different from normal that Max could see that the expressions of the others were different from when moments like these occurred.

Fowl even shot him a look with his eyes, motioning to where their mage stood.

“You can do it,” Max said as he moved closer, staying a little off to the side as he towered over both of the dwarves.

Without replying, she opened the chest and looked inside.

“That’s unusual.”

Her statement made everyone hurry up to look inside and see what had prompted her choice of words.

“Is that a skill shard?” Cordellia asked.

“I believe so,” Max replied.

A single shard changed color as it waited for the team to decide who would try to win the drop. Next to it were two more clear crystals.

“Seems a bit of a letdown,” Fowl muttered. “I mean… I know those are ultra rare, but still.”

“Who is going to roll on it?” Batrire asked.

“I’ll pass,” Max said quickly. “Obviously, that’s not something I need to worry about.”

The other four looked at each other and all shrugged.

“I guess we’ll see who wins,” Tanila said as she held her hand out over it. The other three joined her, and soon, a single gray die with five images of each appeared and started to spin.

“Good luck,” their healer said as they all anxiously watched the gods decide who would get a new skill.

As it tumbled and rolled, finally coming to a stop, Cordellia let out a high-pitched squeal as her face faced upward.

“I won!”

“Congrats,” Fowl said as he gently patted her arm. “Now tell us what you got.”

Reaching in she pulled out the shard, which had settled on a light purple color.

Her eyes widened after she obviously inspected it. A second later, her hand squeezed it, shattering the object and causing tendrils of what looked like purple water to coat her hand and run up her arm.

Their archer shuddered as it continued past her shoulder and climbed her neck.

“Oh my!”

As she spoke, the liquid rushed into Cordellia’s mouth, and she started to gag before swallowing it. Coughing a few times, she stood up and grabbed her chest, wincing at whatever was taking place.

A soft green glow coated their archer as Batrire cast a healing spell on her, but it appeared to have no effect.

“I’m fine,” she stated, holding up her other hand. “Just… the pain was so intense for a moment.”

“Well… what did you get?”

Clearing her throat and wiping a few tears that had come from her eyes, Cordellia smiled.

“Let me show you!” she exclaimed, taking a few steps away from them.

Holding her hands out before her, they glowed purple for a moment. A runic circle of the same color appeared on the ground, and from it a three-foot-tall wolf rose upward. It took a few seconds for the creature to manifest completely, but when it did, it sat on the ground and looked up at her.

“Is it real?” Max asked.

“No,” their ranger said with a sigh as she bent down and rubbed the purple fur that it was covered in. “It lasts for up to three hours or until it dies. Still, I can tell it what I want it to do if that doesn’t seem strange. Like…”

As she stood, the wolf suddenly bolted forward, crossing the metal Colosseum floor faster than anyone but Cordellia or Max could. It began to zig-zag and run around in obvious patterns before returning to where it had started and sitting down again.

“That’s pretty cool,” Fowl said. “Can it play fetch?”

A groan was the only reply he got from Cordellia.

“That should be a useful companion,” Tanila stated. “I guess we just need to get the crystals, and then we can return back to the Faction house and call it a day.”

Max nodded. As he began to reach into the chest, his hand became smaller. By the time he had gotten the first one out, he had returned to his normal size.

“Well at least it only lasts a little bit,” Fowl said. “Not sure how I’d feel if I had to be around you like that all the time.”

Retrieving the last crystal, Max motioned to the portal that appeared near them.

“Yeah, I don’t think I’d like to be that big all the time either.”

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“I’m fine, really. I know you think I’m not, but you need to let it go.”

Tanila’s expression showed just how frustrated she was from the question he always asked, but inside Max couldn’t shake that something had happened to her since the red skill had been upgraded from the elixir.

“You say that, but trust me, all of us can see the change in you. I’m just saying you’re acting differently, and if you need someone to listen or talk with, you know I understand the struggle of controlling a skill like that.”

“But you don’t,” she stated, glaring at him. For the first time he could ever remember she was almost scowling at him. “You haven’t had this for years. You didn’t have to live with this power and be taught how to use it to become stronger. Every day you didn’t have to tell yourself you wouldn’t give in and go against your family’s wishes.

“Even when you did give in, you were able to justify your actions by giving someone *mercy* as they were going to die. I didn’t. Whenever I used the skill to end someone’s life it was for myself. Now… it’s like tenfold… no, a hundred times worse!”

Her eyes were filled with rage, and Max watched as she waved both hands in the air.

“All my life I just wanted to ignore this skill, promising myself I would never let it get stronger.”

She moved closer to him, thrusting her finger in his chest.

“I have seen what happens when one of my family members uses their skill points and upgrades it. They change. Do you know how many of my kind are like me?”

“You and your sister?”

Shaking her head, she laughed, a dark edge to it.

“No… I wish it was just her and I. There are five of us. My sister is the only one I know of that is actively causing problems, though I’m certain my three brothers are either in a prison cell within the castle or off somewhere getting in trouble.”

“Uh… no one ever mentions you having brothers.”

“That is because only my family and a few others know of them. Do you know why that is?”

They are a threat to her father.

He knew his eyes reacted to what Bob said, and Tanila frowned as she shook her head.

“Bob told you. I can see it. Even he knows. Each of them are a threat, and yet they are given a chance to grow stronger. Just like my sister and I… all for a single reason I only now really understand, and that scares me beyond anything else.”

“Thuyja.”

She frowned and nodded.

“Everything I believed came crashing down when we learned what she was doing in this world.”

The rage on her face vanished, and a look Max recognized as shame came. Her eyes went to the floor immediately, unable to hold his gaze for longer than a moment.

“I knew at that moment that if you hadn’t been here… if we… we didn’t have this child growing… I… I’m not sure what I would have become.”

Standing there, feeling like there was a massive chasm between them, even though only a couple feet of actual space existed, Max struggled with how to respond.

Taking a deep breath, he slowly reached out with a hand. Even after she shrugged it off at first, he didn’t give up, putting both arms around her.

Pulling her close, he said nothing, not letting her push away as she had tried for a brief moment before she stopped, and the tears began to come.

Her legs started to give out, but Max didn’t let her fall. He was easily able to support her with his strength.

Minutes passed as she sobbed in his arms. Through it all he said nothing.

“What if I cannot stay strong and… our child… I—”

“You’re not in this alone,” Max replied, cutting her off. “I’ll never leave your side.”

Kissing her forehead, he used a hand to lift her chin and stare into her bloodshot eyes.

“You’re the kindest and most amazing elf I know. I’ll be your anchor like you were mine. Together, we’ll overcome our fears and doubts and conquer the tower and raise a child who knows real love.”

Sniffing she smiled and then laughed, choking as she saw him hold out a handkerchief.

“How did I ever get so lucky?”

“Somewhere is a god I guess that knew we both would need each other,” Max replied, giving her his best smile. “Even if they thought we might be oil and water, we’ll show them that we’re proof we choose our own paths. And I, Tanila Gilmenor, choose you to be the one I love.”

Sighing, she reached up and ran her nails over his bald head. “When you talk like that, I sometimes feel my inner dwarf calling out to me.”

“It’s a shame we can’t do a double wedding, because I would marry you right now.”

She nodded and rubbed his head one last time.

“Well, we’ll just have to wait. Not too long, though.”

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Chapter 405 - Preparing for a Wedding

“We need to hurry,” Fowl said as his pickaxe hewed another chunk of stone from the rock. “We’ve only got two more days before the wedding, and I’ve not found anything worth giving Batrire yet.”

Max snorted and glanced over his shoulder, looking down the tunnel they had created and watching the line of dwarves who were carting off the stone they had freed from their day of mining.

How much stone have we moved and all of the ore we found so far isn’t one he likes?

Too much, but you and I both know that he is taking this seriously. From what we were told, this is a big part of the ceremony.

Over and over the sound of Max and the two pickaxes he wielded rang out, making it hard for the dwarves who had tried singing as they mined, unable to find a cadence that matched his pace.

A flurry of swings dug him deeper into the dark gray stone, revealing veins of ore that Fowl had passed on dozens of times already.

“You two hold up! We need to brace the ceiling!”

A grunt came from the dwarven warrior as he stored the tool that was taking the brunt of his frustration.

“How hard is it for them to keep up? I mean surely they are used to my people mining like this.”

“I doubt they get two tower climbers who can do what we’re doing,” Max replied as he stored his pickaxes and began grabbing rock, storing the larger chunks to help speed up the process. “You and I both were told hours ago that they had to request extra wood because of how far we’ve gone. This is the sixth tunnel we’ve extended today.”

Fowl muttered and shrugged, helping to clear rock from the side he had been working on.

“You two need to slow down,” Longubam shouted. “Seriously, my workers are struggling to keep this mountain from falling in on you both.”

Max glanced at the dwarven foreman responsible for watching over them. His leather outfit had a lightstone attached to the front and back, as well as on his metal helmet, casting light in every direction.

With him close, it was now possible to see the thin layer of dust that hung in the air, neither him nor Fowl having any issues with it due to their high constitution.

“He’s in a hurry. We’ve only got two more days, and supposedly there is a certain type of ore he’s looking for to give his bride,” Max stated.

“Oh gods, I know. The king himself sent a note to my boss, and that’s why I’m here. Trust me, if we’re going to find the rose ore, it’s in this area, but like I said at the start, that stuff is rare.”

“Rare? Like how about nonexistent,” Fowl muttered, waving his hands in the air. “I mean, we’ve done more work than most teams would do in a week. Just how much of the other ore have we procured?”

A slight smile appeared on Longubam’s lips.

“Well, I’m way ahead on my required amount for a month at least, but none of that matters if we can’t find what you’re looking for. Still, trust me. We’ll stay at this as long as we can. Every one of us knows what this ore means to you.”

Taking a deep breath and letting it out slowly, Fowl nodded.

“Sorry… pre-wedding jitters. I… I shouldn’t get cranky at you over this.”

The foreman’s laughter echoed down the tunnel they had built as he held his stomach.

“What kind of dwarf doesn’t get cranky? Besides, soon you’ll need permission to be cranky!”

Both Max and Fowl started to chuckle, each knowing how true that statement was.

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“Here!”

Max’s shout caused his dwarven friend to come scrambling down the tunnel, his metal cap bouncing up and down as he jogged, weaving past chunks of stone. Each step caused the area the lightstone illuminated to shift.

“Dear Ockrim, is it really there?” Fowl asked, arriving at the spot Max was waiting, a glistening line of pink ore sparkling in the wall, the vein of it slowly spreading to hide behind more rock.

“That’s what we’re looking for? Right?”

Rough, stubby fingers stretched out and began to touch the ore that Max had uncovered, and a grin broke out on the warrior’s face.

“It is! May the gods bless you with ten children, Max!”

His friend threw both arms around him and squeezed him tight, laughing the entire time.

“How about we get through one first and see how that goes?”

“Bah, you’re no fun. Now then, let me free this thing from its tomb, and then we can go!”

Max backed up a few steps and watched as his friend spat on both hands and rubbed them together, his pickaxe appearing between them, and began the process of removing the stone from around the vein.

Each strike was well done, and Max sensed Longubam’s presence as the dwarf drew near, not saying a word as the warrior worked at acquiring the ore that would be Batrire’s wedding gift.

They had worked nonstop, except for when they were forced to relocate down a different mine shaft, and finally on the eighth one were rewarded with this moment.

Soon, a rough, nine-inch section of pink ore set between the dark gray stone was in Fowl’s hand, and a smile so bright, it could illuminate a dark tunnel was present.

“It’s perfect. Thank you, Max.”

Putting a hand on his friend’s shoulder, he nodded.

“That’s what family does. They spend their lives in the mine looking for something neither of us will ever use.”

Laughing, the pair started to walk toward the exit.

“Uh, you two don’t want to help with all this?” Longubam asked as he pointed at the large chunks of stone lying on the floor.

“Nope!” Fowl shouted, not even looking over his shoulder. “I’m a warrior, not a miner!”

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Fowl looked at his mother and father, neither of them saying a word as they sat in a small room the king had given them.

Greeta looked like she had sucked a whole crate of lemons, lips pursed and eyes narrowed as she stared at the carpeted floor.

Orstein sat in his chair, shaking his head as he glared at the woman.

“Mom… I know why you are upset, but this is the last time I’m going to ask. Are you wanting to come to the wedding?”

She grunted and then snorted, looking up at him.

“How is it you suddenly think you’re better than us?”

He shook his head and ignored the hand gestures she gave, motioning at herself and his dad.

“I don’t, Mother. I never thought I was. You… you always made sure none of us considered ourselves better than anyone.”

“That’s because none of us are important! Only the family and the tradition we have had for thousands of years! You turned your back on that! The first Hammerfall in over a thousand years to not take up the hammer and work the forge! Do you understand how much shame we felt because of that choice?”

Her voice echoed off the stone walls, the tapestries that lined two walls doing nothing to soften the edge of her voice.

“Greeta, you’re being a fool.”

Both of them turned to see the usually quiet dwarf shaking his head at her.

“What!?”

“I said,” Fowl’s father stated, clearing his throat as he spoke. “You’re being a fool! No one said anything about his choice. No one came over and mocked us or made fun of what he did. Only you turned it into something more than it was. Even though I wasn’t happy with his choice, it was hard to argue with the skills he was given. Still you—”

“So now you’re blaming me!?”

The sound of the stone chair grinding against the floor was almost as loud as her shout.

“Yes. I am.”

Greeta stood there, mouth open, her nostrils flaring as she wagged a finger at her husband. No words came, yet it was obvious from the glare she gave just how she felt about his statement.

“Is this what I’ve caused?”

Both of his parents turned to see Fowl sitting in his chair, a few tears running down his cheek and into his beard.

“What?”

Using a thumb to wipe away a few tears, Fowl sighed.

“Dad, have I caused all these problems with my choice?”

“Yes!”

“No,” his father replied. “She’s always been this way.”

“Bah, you ogre humping—”

Fowl realized his eyes were never wider than they were at this moment, watching his dad move quickly, grabbing his mother by her beard and tugging her toward him, mid-curse.

“Listen to me, Greeta Hammerfall!” he growled. “I’ve put up with the abuse long enough, but I’m done. Our son is a hero! The king himself offered him a spot in his Guard—”

“Which he turned—”

A sharp tug cut her off, and Orstein’s finger poked her nose.

“Do not interrupt, woman! The king offered him a spot in one of the most sacred places in our entire kingdom. Ockrim himself showed his support by the token he gave. And yet you… you cannot see the shape of the weapon before you start to hammer the ingot. Look at that boy, able to wipe the floor with any dwarf in here, yet he sits there, tears on his face because all he wants is for us to come to his wedding.

“A wedding that many have believed would happen since he was barely twenty and smitten with Batrire. Probably one of the greatest weddings our kingdom will ever see since the king himself got married to Velda Stormfall. Yet even with all that, you still sit here and complain about honor and family.”

Letting go of the beard, Orstein frowned and began to rub his finger for a moment until a silver-colored ring appeared between two of them.

“You gave me this, and I have worn it every day since our wedding. You promised to love me and our family. To honor it and do everything possible to ensure the legacy of my family. Yet now…”

Fowl hadn’t realized he had risen from his chair as he watched his father act in a way he could only once remember him having done so.

“If you’re going to miss out on seeing how our son is about to bring the greatest honor our family has ever acquired in thousands of years, then I guess you have forgotten our vows, and I need to give you this back.”

A gasp came from Greeta as she glanced at the ring held before her and the frown on her husband’s face.

“But, his choice—”

“Was approved by Ockrim and our king. Acknowledge that, or take this right now.”

Grunting and almost choking, she stood there, glancing now between Orstein and Fowl.

“But his children—”

“It doesn’t matter in a moment if he has any children because you won’t be a part of their lives if you can’t get past this moment. I know you feel slighted. The pain you think you felt when we both learned he had been secretly training for this class while we thought he was off with her, stung for a bit. But now…”

Orstein sighed as he closed his eyes. It took him two more deep breaths before he opened them.

“Fowl Hammerfall has completed the 59th floor in the tower. He may potentially beat the entire tower. Even if he doesn’t, every dwarf for the next five hundred years will know his name. None of them, however, will know yours, unless you choose to deny him. If you do that, every dwarf will know your name as the mother who was so concerned with her own butt-hurt, that she missed out on having a relationship with the greatest dwarf in half a millennium.”

It took great effort for Fowl not to react. His heart felt like it was dying, and yet had never felt happier at the same time.

Hearing his father speak about him like this was a treat he had never experienced.

Yet knowing that those words were true almost broke him.

No one said a word, each of them standing there, not moving.

Orstein held the ring out before him.

Fowl stood there silently, praying to Ockrim for his mother to make the right choice.

Greeta still had her mouth partially open, not yet seemingly able to speak.

Dear Ockrim. For once I could use a little bit of that love right now.

77 Chapter 406 - King and Queen of the Dwarves

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Chapter 406 - King and Queen of the Dwarves

“So… how did it go?” Max asked.

Fowl grunted and shrugged.

“We’ll find out tomorrow. For now we need to finish up a few last things, and I’d rather not dwell upon that problem. Did you get what I asked for?”

A stone box appeared in Max’s hand, and he held it out for his friend.

Taking it, Fowl opened it and let out a low whistle.

“It’s better than I hoped. Thank you.”

Nodding, he took it back when the warrior handed it to him and stored it.

“Are you ready to meet Dagon and Velda?”

Chuckling, his friend shook his head.

“No and stop saying it like that. They’re the king and queen. I’m not ready to call them by their first names.”

Smiling, Max shrugged.

“Regardless, you’re getting to meet them both as they show you everything for tomorrow. Word is the queen actually returned from a trip she had been on just for this moment.”

“Yeah… which is a special thing in and of itself. Her guard was doing some recruiting at the different towns as the shard was brought before them. It’s one of the things she really enjoys doing.”

Shaking his head, Max tried to imagine what it would have been like if either of the queens had appeared at his Choosing Day.

“You dwarves are so weird. Who would have imagined that your queen makes a personal appearance. Still, I find that rather cool that she does such a thing.”

“It’s one of the big parts of our culture,” Fowl said as he glanced out the carriage window, motioning to the area they were in. “She is the mother every dwarf wants.”

Max watched his friend wince as his friend said those words.

“Well, I never had a king and queen come to my wedding and open *the Great Hall* for me.”

“Bah, just you wait! I’m sure Tanila’s dad is going to be more than excited when you show up.”

Rolling his eyes, he gave Fowl the middle finger and watched his friend smile, both of them knowing that no matter how bad Greeta was, she couldn’t compare with how Savantus and Sylvandra Gilmenor were going to be.

“Makes me wish for an evil dwarven mother.”

“Keep wishing, you might get that.”

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“I said you can rise.”

It took Fowl a moment to stand up straight, his eyes still fixed at the carpet he stood on.

Max did his best to not grin as he watched his friend visibly struggle to gaze upon Velda Hammerfall.

She was a very attractive dwarf, who was only about three inches shorter than her husband. Unlike him and his white hair, hers was blond and braided with expert precision. Even her beard seemed to shine in the light of the magical stones. Two piercing blue eyes never took their gaze off the warrior standing next to him. Her armor, though simple in some ways, was sparkling in the light, the silver chain outfit having been polished like a mirror.

“Forgive me, my queen. It’s just that… I never imagined this moment. It was one thing to see you upon the day I got my skill and to receive the gift you gave, but to be here, talking like dwarves…”

A light laugh came from her, and she reached out with a hand and waved off his comment.

“Please. You, Fowl Hammerfall, are a rare treat for my eyes. I remember the day you got your skills. I had high hopes that you would accomplish great things, and it appears I was right. Now tell me, has Dagon managed to do everything your bride has asked for?”

A chuckle came from the king, who shifted slightly on his throne.

“I have personally emptied the kingdom’s vault to ensure that this wedding is second only to yours.”

Velda smiled and nodded.

“Then tell me, you acquired the ore as well, I have been informed. May I see it?”

Fowl nodded and pulled it from storage, holding it out.

“Impressive. A true testament of your love for her. I remember how much I enjoyed hearing it took almost a month for Dagon to finally mine the one he gave me. Nothing makes a bride happier than to hear that her husband has toiled and sweated to prove their love.”

“Oh, and how I toiled and sweated,” the king joked. “A month… it took me a month to find what I was looking for. And you must have Ockrim’s own luck to find that in a single day.”

“Well, I did have help,” Fowl said as he motioned to Max with his head. “I’m afraid we may have caused your men some problems with all the digging we did.”

Laughter came from both dwarves, who sat upon their stone chairs, filling the room they were meeting in only containing the four of them and four guards.

“Yes… I have heard about the amount of stone you both moved. It has been ages since I have mined, but now part of me wants to see if I could keep pace with you two,” Dagon said. “One often forgets the strength that is acquired in the tower. Most of our miners would give much to have a fraction of the stats you both have.”

“And you, Max Hoste,” Velda said, almost interrupting her husband. “You honor your brother by standing by his side during that entire time. I am sad to have missed the ceremony of brotherhood, but it is obvious from what I have heard and see that you two are bound by blood.”

Giving a slight bow he smiled.

“I am grateful to you both for taking care of my brother and soon to be sister. I’m afraid that all I can say is thank you for loving on your children.”

Both of them shifted a little and grinned.

“You are a marvel,” the queen stated. “I have heard that Ockrim himself appeared to you and that you have a token of his that appears my husband has not managed to find a price you are willing to sell it for yet.”

“I am afraid you are right… Part of me feels unable to let go of it. If I wasn’t afraid that your husband might start offering me a wedding here when the time comes and paying for it all as he has already done, I would show it again. Perhaps when he isn’t around, I’ll let you see it.”

A groan came from Dagon, and his wife started to chuckle slightly.

“You do know him very well. He has spoken about it many times, telling me how he wishes he could own it. Still I am more than happy to set aside a time to see it without him. The last thing I need is for both of us to start bidding on something and truly empty the kingdom’s vault.”

Giving a slight bow again, Max tapped his chest once with his fist.

“That does bring me to the next part of all this. I have learned it is customary for the family to give a gift to those who host a wedding, and so as Fowl’s brother, I have a gift for both of you if you will allow me to honor the custom I know you hold dear.”

Clearing his throat, Dagon winced slightly but nodded.

“We had not expected a gift, as this is a treat for us, but since you have brought it up, I cannot turn it down.”

“May I?” Max asked, motioning for him to approach.

A single nod came from the king, and so he winked at Fowl as they both took the five steps that separated them from the pair.

With one last nod, each of them pulled out a large gold dragon scale, each three feet in length.

“May these gifts find a place of use in the Stormfall home, and may they serve to protect those who live within its walls.”

Velda smiled, and her head began to move slowly from side to side.

“You… we are honored, and yet this gift… it is far beyond what anyone could ask for.”

“Yet my brother gives them as a testament of his own free will and thanks for all you have done for me and my bride,” Fowl replied. “Know that these come from his personal treasure. None of what he offers has a tie to anyone but himself.”

Max’s Sonar picked up the tiny gust of wind that came from Dagon’s lips as he heard Fowl’s words.

“Two dragon scales… of this size are worth much. For such a gift… I…”

King Dagon’s lips moved for a few seconds, his eyes fixed upon both scales, and then he turned to his wife and snorted.

“Tomorrow, I will do something unusual but if you trust me, my dear, I think it is the only way I can hope to honor such a gift as these.”

“In all my years of knowing you, I must say you only make a mistake when I’m not present, so I’m certain whatever you have decided will be perfect.”

A chuckle came from Fowl, who quickly stopped it before Dagon himself started to laugh.

“Do not worry, she is right as you shall soon find out Batrire will most likely be. Often my temper can get the best of me, and sometimes I allow myself to think more highly of myself than I should. She serves as the oil, tempering my blade and keeping me from cracking or breaking when the real moment comes.

“But as I was saying, tomorrow I will have a moment where I will find a way to honor this gift. We thank you for the testament of your love for your brother.”

Max and Fowl handed over the scales, watching as the king and queen turned them over, admiring and inspecting them for a minute.

“I would have loved to have seen the dragon these came from,” Greeta said. “I wonder if it was a male or a female dragon.”

“Does that matter?” Max asked.

“Oh, for certain!” she exclaimed. “Each dragon has different qualities. While a male dragon often has tougher scales, a female dragon is slightly softer. It might be hard to imagine that such a thing is possible to detect, but judging from what I can feel, these would most likely be…”

Her voice trailed off as her fingers ran along the outer edge, feeling the thickness of it. With a grunt she put some pressure on both sides, almost as if she was trying to fold it in half.

“Do you know the sex of the dragon this came from?”

“I do,” Max answered.

“Should I ask if you took these from the corpse of the original owner?”

Her eyes almost sparkled as she watched him, and Max could sense the gaze of all four guards as well as the king upon him.

“Would that matter?”

Sighing, Velda shrugged.

“Only in making your fame rise more.”

“Then I’ll choose to not answer. Some might think that I did, and I’ll gain honor there while others will believe that I didn’t, and I won’t have to worry about them thinking I lied. Either way, I’m not here to honor myself, just Fowl and the both of you.”

“Gods, he’s gifted with that tongue,” Dagon said as he stored the scale he had been holding.

“And he has managed to ignore the question I asked and yet didn’t,” she pointed out.

“Tell me what sex you think the dragon was, and I’ll tell you if you’re right.”

She smiled and nodded, rubbing her fingers one last time along the edge.

“If I was a betting dwarf—”

“And she is if you play cards with her,” Dagon interrupted.

Rolling her eyes, Velda shook her head.

“Ignore him. I’d bet this came from a female dragon.”

Smiling, Max nodded.

“How did you know that?”

Licking her lips, Velda tapped the edge a few times.

“The size of this and its shape. I can tell this came from a portion of the chest. While most might not be able to tell such a thing, I’ve seen a few scales in my time and have read extensively upon them. We don’t have many scales left in our vault, and it appears that we won’t have any joining them for a while to come. Unless one of the few dragons still in our world decides to just donate their body or cause so many problems that all three kingdoms work together to take it down, the effort to fight one isn’t worth it.”

She flipped over the scale and showed the back of it, tapping a few areas that Max knew were where the flesh had attached to it.

“If you look here, you’ll notice the spots where scales are attached and see how deep the grooves are. For a scale of this size and shape, a male dragon would have much deeper ones because they have typically stronger muscles up front, and this leads to them requiring the extra space to connect with.”

Max knew he was shaking his head, amazed that Velda so easily seemed to know these things and understood how they worked.

Smiling to himself, he winked at her.

“I think I need to witness this to be certain.”

“Oh, I wish I had one like this to compare, but we don’t. All the scales we have are smaller, and I’m afraid it wouldn’t give a good comparison. We’d need a male scale of something similar in size to be able to show that.”

It was at that moment, that Max pulled a silver dragon scale from Kuneoss, holding it upside down so that the underside was present.

Dagon began to cough as Velda started to laugh.

“Oh, Max Hoste… you’re going to cause this husband of mine to spend some gold today.”

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A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Dishelved saves

Chapter 407 - The Hammering of Vows

Max watched as Fowl fidgeted next to him.

“You’ll be fine. Just hold still, or I swear you’re going to make a scene in all that armor.”

“I’m sweating… in places I shouldn’t be,” Fowl muttered. “It’s not that hot, I’m just—”

“Nervous?”

A grin appeared on his dwarven friend as he bobbed his head.

“So many people. I mean… five hundred? Maybe more?”

Max nodded and looked out across the great hall they were in.

His friend was right. There were close to five hundred or more dwarves all lined up along the edges of the hall. Near them were King Dagon and Queen Velda, both sitting on stone thrones just a dozen yards away, each wearing plate armor that almost glowed in the light of the hall.

This was a sacred place, reserved often only for those of noble blood or of the royal family, yet because of what Fowl and Batrire had accomplished and the apparent blessing of Ockrim, no one could argue that this wasn’t the perfect place for their union.

Dagon smiled at them, a purple sash wrapped around his waist, his wife wearing a matching one. Each of them had their hair done in tight braids, and both looked ready to not only rule but entertain as well.

Fowl shifted, the blue sash that was wrapped around his waist moving again, and Max chuckled.

Both of them wore the same outfit almost, except his dwarven friend had on plate armor, while he wore a brightly polished chain set.

Between them and the king and queen was an anvil, larger than usual, wrapped in blue and red flowers. Next to it sat two hammers, one on each side. One had the blue flowers which matched the color of Fowl's sash, in a wreath and resting around the shaft. The other had red flowers in a similar wreath.

Twenty-five anvils lined each side of the hall, and there was a dwarf behind each one, hammer in hand.

The six closest to Fowl had his family there, and Max smiled as he saw that both parents were in attendance, whatever issue that had been taking place was seemingly set on hold for this moment.

On the other side were Batrire's parents, both of them dressed in red outfits, each looking ready to cry at a moment's notice.

Tell me, how much cloth was required for her father's jacket. Jataic looks like the largest apple I've ever seen.

With great effort, Max held back the laughter he wanted to let out, knowing that he had thought the same thing, except only a tomato.

Next to them stood Tanila and Cordellia, each of them wearing a slightly different red dress, both looking like jewels amongst the rest.

"I love you." Max mouthed and saw her smile and wink at him.

All over the hall were large arches with glowing lanterns hanging from them. Each one was a treasure, using some of the best metal and decoration techniques a crafter could possess. Gems ordained the closest ones, the light from inside cascading in a rainbow of colors.

Fiery braziers that were meant to represent forges cast light near the anvils that were manned around the room.

The din of small chatter carried across the room, but a small laughter made both of them smile as they saw Everett, Tom, Dexic, and about thirty other members from their Faction all standing on Batrire's side.

"You know you're loved when the Faction leader comes to your wedding," Max said as he leaned near his friend.

"Bah, you know it's because they get a chance to see the king and queen."

"Still, that's an impressive group of people at your wedding. I'm certain you'll be the talk of the town for a while."

Fowl nodded and grinned.

"You heard how much alcohol her parents brought?"

"I did," Max replied. "I guess there won't be a dry cup in the city. Everyone gets a drink, courtesy of the king."

As they stood there, both of them commented on the different outfits that the guests wore. It allowed for time to pass, and each of them waited for the moment both knew would eventually come.

Soon, the sound of a hammer banging on an anvil rang out from the far end of the hall, and immediately, the whole room went silent.

As one, the gathered group of guests turned their attention to see a large pair of stone doors, each one bearing half of the image of Ockrim, swing open.

There in the middle of it stood Batrire.

“She’s beautiful,” Fowl whispered.

Max nodded, gazing upon the dwarf waiting to enter the room.

She wore a red robe covered in silver and gold runes. On her face was a silver veil, red gems decorating it.

Her head was back, and the way she moved when the first anvil on each side rang out spoke of a woman who knew this moment was hers.

Slowly, taking her time, she moved down the purple cloth that would lead to where Fowl and Max stood.

His Sonar told him that Fowl was bouncing up and down on his feet, almost as if he was rocking a little bit.

Soon the sound of two anvils ringing out at the same time from both sides came.

As she passed each anvil, the next one joined in the beat, the sound of metal on metal filling the room.
The sound was almost overwhelming when she reached the last one. Each strike that came with her steps reverberated in his chest.

They sure know how to make this moment stand out. You’re going to have to do something spectacular to top this.

His smile grew a little more as he knew Bob was right, unsure exactly what he could do to top all this.

The last five steps came, and when Batrire stood in line with Fowl, the ringing of the anvils stopped.

“You look beautiful,” Fowl said, almost shouting.

Chuckles came from around the room, but it was obvious that Batrire didn’t mind, winking at him once before they came together and clasped hands.

As one they moved to where the anvil the king and queen had moved to during the procession.

“Fowl Hammerfall and Batrire Lightbrew. The day has finally come,” Dagon said as he smiled. “The day that every dwarf looks forward to. When they can join together with another and pledge their love forever.”

After a moment of silence, Velda held out her hand. An ingot appeared on it, a gasp coming from the crowd as everyone recognized it immediately.

She nodded and lifted the metal above her head.

“This is one ingot that all dwarves know by sight. The Fire Forged is a legend for what it can create. Even more so is the marriage that is pledged upon it. You two will be able to pledge your love on one of the greatest gifts Ockrim has ever given us.”

Applause came from most of the room, and after about ten seconds, the queen lowered the bar, and it only took a single eyebrow raise from Dagon to silence the room.

“Do you two have the ore you each have mined?”

Both of them let go of the other’s hand, and soon each had the ore they had collected from their own sweat and effort in their palms.

A gasp came from Batrire as she saw the rose color of the ore in Fowl’s hand. A single tear formed, and she sniffed, somehow almost willing the liquid that threatened to ruin her appearance.

Fowl grinned, almost beaming as he saw her reaction, and nodded at the silver ore she held in hers.

“Do you accept the offer of ore?”

“I do,” Batrire said.

“As do I,” Fowl replied.

“Then place the ore here.”

Both of them moved and set the ore on top of the anvil. Each took a step back, and Velda held her hands out, both empty at this moment.

Her husband picked up each piece and gave them a kiss and then set them in her hands.

She repeated the process and then brought both together, her large hands easily holding each.

Light began to form around them, and the queen let out a grunt, eyes locked upon the ore she held.

For a good thirty seconds, the light grew brighter, and a few drops of sweat formed on her brow.

Then suddenly the light ended, and Velda let out a snort.

In her hand, she showed them an ingot, the silver and rose color swirled together.

That is an impressive ability. Even though we were told this would happen, I had wondered if it would be magic or simply a sleight of hand.

Max nodded and knew that Bob was right. He felt the magic that had poured out from whatever ability the queen had used.

Dagon took the bar and set it upon the forge.

“Like your lives, this bar has been fused together from that which you both have pledged. To separate these from each other would destroy everything. Likewise, your lives are forever intertwined, even in death.”

He looked at them both intently for a moment and then smiled.

“Do you, Fowl Hammerfall, accept this union?”

“I do.”

“Then pledge your love as you strike it.”

Fowl nodded and picked up the hammer on his side.

He turned to where Batrire was and reached up with a hand, careful to not lift her veil, only able to see her eyes.

Under it was her beard, braided and ordained with red rubies set in silver jewelry.

With the softest touch, he stroked her beard.

“I promise you my life, my heart, and my soul, for now and beyond death. No one else matters more than you. Forever you shall be my partner and friend. As the mountain above us stands, so my love for you will never fade. Upon the gaze of Ockrim, may all know that today I vow to always defend you and fight for you.”

His hammer moved, striking the bar, the sound of it ringing out.

“I promise to always love our children.”

The sound of metal on metal rang out again.

“I promise that all my gold shall be yours to spend.”

A few gasps came from some before the sound of his hammer striking the ingot silenced them.

“I love you, Batrire Lightbrew. Since the day my eyes took in your face, I knew I could love no other.”

His hammer rang out once more, and then Fowl set it down on the ground.

Max wiped his cheek, aware that he had sprung a leak.

“Batrire Lightbrew. You have heard the pledge of your betrothed. Do you wish to pledge your love as well?”

“I do.”

After he nodded, she picked up her hammer with one hand and used her other to unhook the veil that covered her face. There, hidden behind the metal was a smile that could outshine the sun.

“Fowl Hammerfall… there is no other dwarf that I wish to heal besides you.”

Chuckles came as she struck the ingot with the hammer.

“You know that I will follow you anywhere and that I will always support you. No matter what happens in this life or in the next, I will be there, right beside you. Like the ore that I mined, my love for you runs deep and belongs only to you.”

The peal of metal rang out.

“No one shall ever take your place.”

Her hammer struck again, and her smile grew.

“I promise to have as many children as you wish, and will honor the promise you made of naming the first.”

Max felt his heart skip a beat as she struck the ingot with her hammer.

A slight chuckle came from Fowl, but he didn’t flinch or move.

“I love you, Fowl Hammerfall, and I accept your gold if you will accept my love.”

One last time, the hammer rang out, and she set it down on the ground.

“The pledges have been made, the metal has been struck. Speak now if either of you do not accept what has been promised.”

A few seconds of silence passed, and then Dagon smiled and nodded.

“Very well. Then let us move to the next part of this ceremony.”

With that, Max saw him motion to him.

Looks like we’re up.

Don’t screw up.

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Chapter 408 - A Gift Forged for Two

Max moved to where Dagon and Velda stood, both of them smiling.

“It is rare for a moment like this to take place, but after some discussion, my husband and I decided that a moment like this shouldn’t be passed up.”

Her and the king moved around the forge and pulled out ornate metal chairs, each carved with runes and set with gems, blue ones in Fowl’s and red ones in Batrire’s.

“Sit, and watch what is about to take place for the two of you.”

Fowl’s eyes darted back and forth between the pair and then at Max, who winked at him.

A forge appeared coal in it and ready to be lit.

With a hand he summoned flames and ignited it, forcing his magic into the forge and causing it to grow hot and flames to appear.

Fowl froze as he prepared to take his seat, moving quickly to where his friend was, ignoring the looks he was getting from the king and queen.

“What are you going to do?” his friend whispered. “Tell me you’re not going to reveal so much to this many!”

A hand motioned from the warrior at the crowd around them.

Drawing close so that he could speak and not be heard by anyone but Fowl, Max squeezed his friend’s shoulder.

“I am, because this next part is more important than that. We both know that word has gotten out from the crafters and the gift I made the king. Besides, what I have planned is worth it.”

He leaned back and with a grin, ruffled his friend’s perfectly placed hair, not doing much to it.

“You’re family. Both of you. Which means I’m willing to share what I can do to give you something that will hopefully always be a reminder of how much you mean to me.”

Sniffing, Fowl nodded and punched Max.

“You’re the greatest gift Ockrim has given me, right after Batrire.”

Chuckling, he hugged his friend and then pointed at the chair next to his bride.

“Go, I’ve got stuff to do, and you need to be with her.”

As Fowl moved to his seat, Max returned to where he had set up the forge.

Dagon moved next to him and pulled a worktable out of storage and set it near him.

“Today we shall witness a crafter and a brother of the groom create something for the bride and groom,” Velda announced, holding her hand up to silence those who were starting to make noise. “This is often reserved only for royalty, but know that Max Hoste is one of the rare humans in this world that has earned the title of blood brother and has gifted both the king and me a gift far greater than either of us have seen in ages. As such we have opened this moment for him to show his love for the pair.”

Only the slightest murmurs took place as she lowered her hand and then motioned to him.

“The moment is yours. Do your brother well.”

Max grinned and nodded. He had been waiting for this moment when Dagon had mentioned it and approved his request.

In his hand appeared his hammer and a metal piece that he had been working on for the last few weeks in secret. Only Tanila had known about it besides the king and queen, and now the moment had come to see if it would work as he hoped.

You're certain this will work?

Certain? No… but it should work. I have analyzed everything I can of what I know of magic and crafting. If this doesn't work, you always have the backup.

Chuckling to himself, Max smiled.

I'd prefer to not have to do that.

Then let's make sure it works the first time.

He moved around the anvil and held the metal piece out before them. Etched all over it were dwarven runes, but on one side at the base was something special.

"Read it."

Both leaned forward and squinted.

"To the only dwarves I love. May this staff keep you together forever."

"What does that mean?" Fowl asked.

"Let's see if I can make it work, and you'll find out."

Returning to the forge, Max set the piece inside it and then infused it with mana. It began to glow, and when it reached the moment he knew it needed to be, pulled it out, holding it in his bare hands.

A slight sizzling noise came as it burned.

Gasps rose from the crowd, but Max didn't flinch.

"Marriage and love isn't easy. It hurts. Those we love are often the ones who can hurt us the deepest. We bare our hearts and soul and in return, entrust them with the deepest secrets we have. So even though pain may come from this, there is also a chance for us to be drawn closer."

He set the metal piece upright on the anvil. It was only about nine inches long and had a hollow section in the middle, formed from a crystal he had to trade for, but what Bob had told him was this was the only way it would work.

"Fowl and Batrire, do you trust me?"

"Sometimes," their healer replied with a wink. "But I've never doubted your care for us."

"You know I trust you with what I hold dearest," his friend stated.

"Then come here. I'll need your help for this next part."

Both rose, moving to where Max stood.

“Fowl, this is going to hurt. I need you to put your hand on top of this. It’s going to burn, and worse is what I’ll do after.”

Turning his attention to Batrire, he smiled.

“You’re responsible for keeping him safe. Heal him when I tell you but only when I tell you. This next part requires you to know he’ll suffer for you. It will also help him to know that you’ll always be there to heal when it is time.”

Both of them nodded, and Fowl took a deep breath, his hand hovering just an inch from the still hot piece of metal.

“No skills?”

Smiling, Max shook his head.

“Figured I’d ask.”

With one last breath, the warrior pressed his palm down on the top of the metal piece that was a little over an inch wide.

Immediately the hissing sound of burning flesh came, yet Fowl didn’t make a sound or react.

“Forgive me,” Max said, holding up a tiny, thin, short metal rod.

With a nod, Fowl turned his eyes to where Batrire stood next to him.

Max plunged the tube into his friend’s hand. Still no reaction came, and slowly blood began to flow through the hollow tube, which had some holes along the side, draining into the crystal area.

It took over a minute for it to be filled, and when Max pulled the needle from his friend’s hand, he motioned to Batrire.

“Heal him.”

A green glow covered Fowl’s hand.

“Take it off.”

Lifting his hand, the dwarf studied it, seeing the lack of burnt flesh or a hole that had been there a moment ago.

“The rest comes down to Batrire and me,” Max said as he pointed at his friend’s chair.

“Bah, I was hoping for something more dangerous,” Batrire replied as she watched Fowl move toward his seat.

Laughter came from the crowd as the groom sat.

A piece of metal the thickness of the hole on top appeared between his fingers, and Max carefully set it inside the opening, tapping it in, and then began to pour mana into the area, watching as it sealed the hole.

“Now listen, this part… it’s going to be hard,” Max whispered. “I’ll tell you when to heal, but I need you to direct it at the blood inside this. Can you do that?”

“The blood?” Batrire whispered. “I mean… I can, but will it work?”

“We’ll find out,” he replied. “Just be ready.”

She nodded, and a metal glove appeared on his right hand.

A fire elemental core appeared, and he began to get to work.

“Heal, normal one.”

Batrire frowned, and after a moment, she nodded, the green glow appearing around where the blood was.

Well it looked like it worked. Time to see if we can do this.

Smiling to himself, Max began to pour more mana and fire magic into the spot he was holding the core.

I’ll owe Everett for these.

Of that, I’m certain he’ll let you know.

***

Hours had passed, and Batrire continued to heal as he called for it, the entire crowd not having left, only occasionally shifting as all tried to see what Max was doing.

The last core absorbed, and he felt a rush of energy.

Letting out the breath he had been holding, Max smiled.

“One last part, it’s your turn to bleed.”

Batrire frowned but nodded and held her hand out to where Max was.

With a quick move of his hand, her finger was laid open, and blood began to flow.

He had the wood staff he had already crafted pressed against the flow of blood, watching as she winced a little but said nothing.

When it was all done, Max connected the pieces, the metal shaft turning once and locking into the metal piece he had already set a few days ago.

“You can heal now.”

She snorted and pulled out a potion, drinking a little before corking it.

With that done, Max began to wipe down the staff, feeling the magic in it react to the cloth and the knowledge it was complete.

[30 Experience Gained]

[Inspect Weapon]

*****

Legendary Elemental Staff of Healing

+ 100 CON/INT/WIS

+ 40% to all healing spells

Healing Meant for One: This staff has been imbued with the life force of Fowl Hammerfall. All heals given to him will receive an extra +20%.

[Bound]

*****

Smiling, Max held it out to Batrire, feeling the weapon almost pull itself to where she stood.

“Holy elf tits!” she exclaimed, her voice carrying across the room.

Tears began to flow from both eyes as she glanced at the weapon in her hand and up at Max, who simply smiled at her.

“Keep him safe, okay?”

Without waiting she rushed to where he stood, storing the staff and wrapping both arms around him.

“Thank you!” she whispered.

Hugging her back, Max gave her a gentle tap after a moment and pulled back.

“Now stop hugging me like that, or he’ll start to get jealous.”

Laughter came from many, and Batrire wiped her face and nodded, turning to where Fowl sat.

“I’ll tell you later,” she said.

“By Ockrim’s beard, you better!”

***

Dagon cleared his throat and stood to one side of the pair as his wife stood on the other, each of them passing the rope they were wrapping around the two.

“As it has been said many times, rope is a common item, but it is often overlooked how special it is until you don’t have it. Love is like this. Many think it is nothing until you don’t have it. Once you see how special it is, there will always be a need for it. May you two be bound as one, and never lose the love that binds you right now.”

As he finished speaking, Velda leaned forward and tied the knot.

“They are one,” she said.

“THEY ARE ONE!”

Max felt the weight of what had just taken place as Tanila squeezed his hand.

“Soon,” he whispered.

She nodded and smiled.

Cheers and whistles came from everyone gathered, and Max couldn’t help but smile as Cordellia let out one of the louder ear-piercing whistles in the hall.

“COME! Come congratulate the new couple!” Dagon shouted.

Both sets of parents moved first, and then Max, Tanila, and Cordellia moved to join the end of the line. After that it was a frenzy as everyone left in the hall began to move as one, all anxious to give their well wishes.

***

Max smiled as he held Tanila close, studying how a number of the Faction members were passed out on various benches and tables in the room they had celebrated.

Near him Cordellia, Dexic, and Tom snored softly, the trio all face first on a stone table.

“Seems like your group can’t hold their liquor,” Erwini teased Everett. “I had high hopes for some fighters with better constitutions.”

“It’s actually Max’s fault. He always pulls out the hard stuff, and they drop like babies after a night on their mom’s teat.”

Chuckles passed between them both as the one responsible for the snoring adventurers held up his cup of green alcohol.

“Don’t blame me if they’re all lightweights. Besides, both of you have barely drank half.”

“I didn’t get hair this gray without learning to take some things slow,” Everett stated. “Besides, I really want to keep my wits about me. I got a lot of things to get in place in a few days.”

Erwini shook her head and snorted.

“Going to another world… I mean… that sounds so… non-Faction leader-like.”

“Jealous?”

She nodded and shrugged.

“If I could get out of this place for a few weeks and explore a new world with this one watching my back, you can bet your ogre nuts I’d be there in a heartbeat.”

“You both are acting like children,” Tanila said. “I mean, you forget he’s going to be doing work while there.”

“ *Work,* ” Erwini said, making quotes as she did. “I’m certain that whatever he is going to do there will be a lot more fun than having to deal with half the stuff here. Besides, it’s a fricking different world!”

“I’ll try to remember to bring you back something,” Everett said as he raised his glass and took a small sip.

A groan came from the dwarven woman as she raised her cup.

“I wonder… no I don’t. I know exactly what those two are doing,” Erwini stated. “Good news is they’ll be back in two days, and then I can expect things to quiet down here a little bit.”

Everett shook his head and grinned.

“Please… you’re going to be overflowing with new applicants in the coming week. Trust me.”

“You mean it’s going to get worse!? I’ve already had like a 25% increase in the last few weeks.”

“Oh, those are the early numbers… just you wait.”

Blowing a raspberry, Erwini shook her head before downing the last of her drink. After setting down her cup, she glared at Max.

“I still can’t believe the very thing you made me take an oath to not share, you publicly display at that wedding. I mean… I get it. What you did was… beyond words.” A small sniff came from the Faction leader of Nalgrun. “The entire city is wondering what those stats are, and last I heard there was a group of other Factions wanting to reach out and commission you for some work.”

“Same old Max,” Everett muttered.

A chuckle came from Tanila as she gave Max a slight poke of her finger, shifting his attention from the other two.

“Two more days,” she whispered. “ *Whatever* shall we do?”

“I’m all yours, my love. So you tell me.”

Rising from her spot, the elven woman smiled and pulled on his hand.

“If you two will excuse us, I think it’s time for us to retire.”

Both Faction leaders nodded and waved at the pair as they left, each shaking their heads as they disappeared from the room.

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https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-7-stubs-march-25th/chapter/2150012/chapter-409-book-7-stats;[word2025-03-25 15:07], [publish2025-03-25 15:06]

Chapter 409 - Book 7 Stats

[Status Check No Weapon or Shield]

*****

Max Hoste

19-Year-old Human Male

Level 1

Exp 566/1000

Tower Experience: 60.0%

Base	Bonus	Items	Total
STR: 1123	+1831	+255	3259
DEX: 1101	+1780	+240	3185
CON: 1047	+1721	+255	3056
INT: 1018	+1626	+165	2888
WIS: 1005	+1607	+165	2853

Defense of the Dragon - 30%

Defense of the Demon - 30%

Demon Essence: - 1641

World Champion: - 20% Stat Increase

Bloodline: - 20% of the required 100% unlocked

Tower Stat Bonus: - 7.5%

*****

Book 7 ch331-409 Ultimate Truths END